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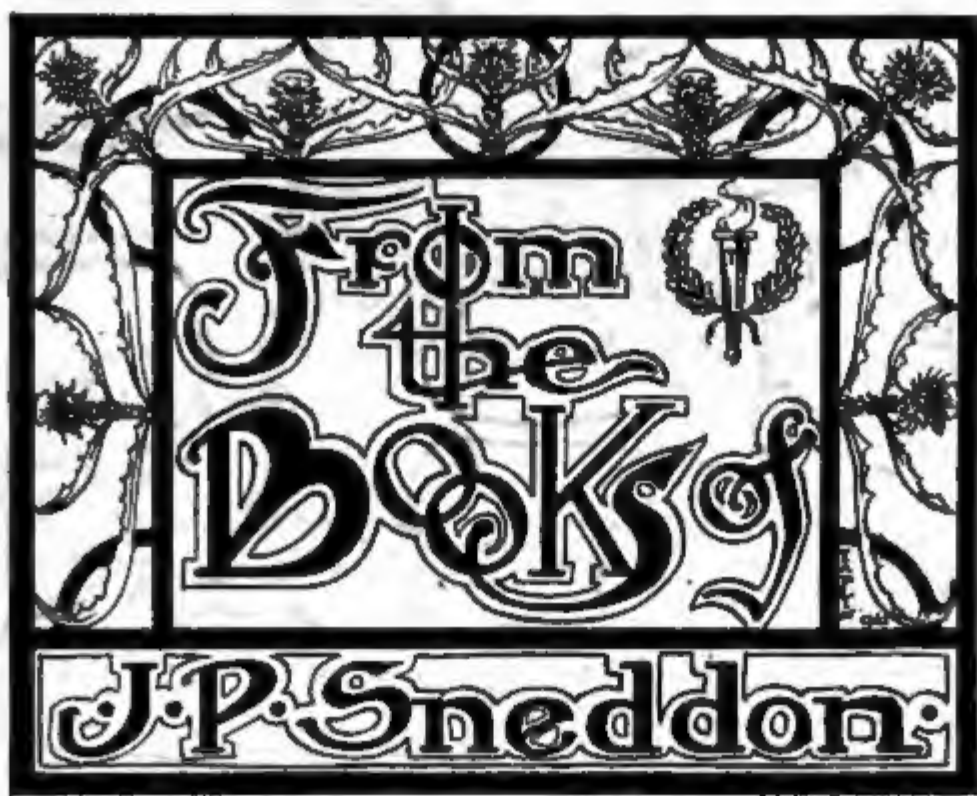
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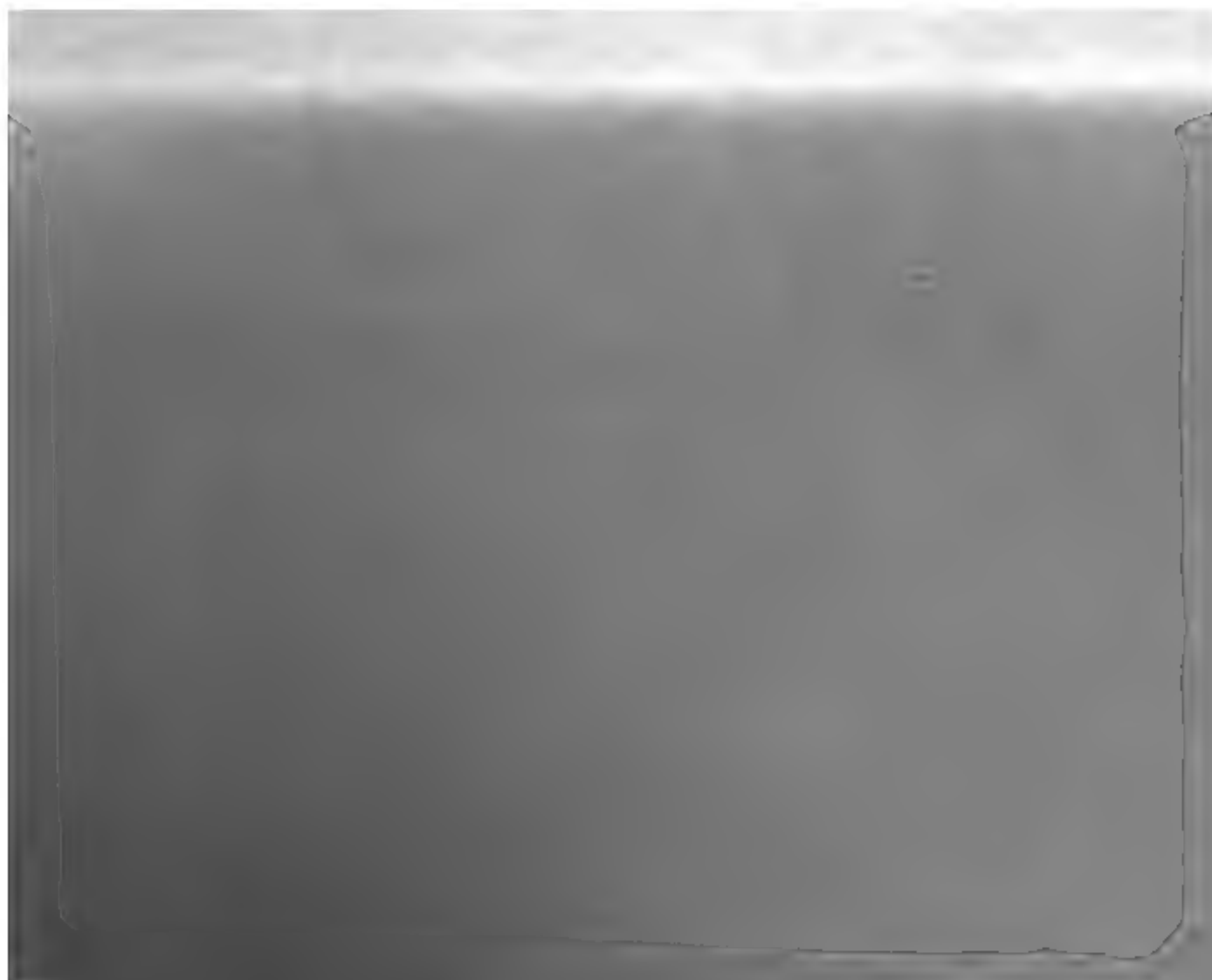
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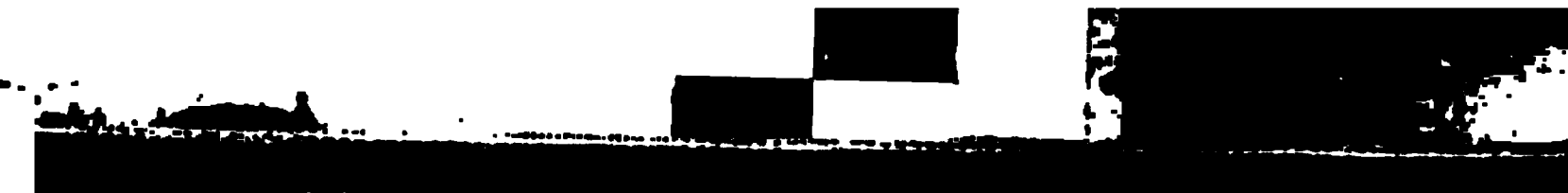
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NCF



*Laurence Sterne. After a Painting by Sir
Joshua Reynolds*



Clonmel Edition De Luxe

THE COMPLETE WORKS AND
LIFE OF
LAURENCE STERNE

VOLUME SIX



LIFE *by* PERCY FITZGERALD

INCLUDING

MEMOIRS OF THE LIFE OF THE FAMILY

OF THE LATE

Rev. MR. LAURENCE STERNE

WRITTEN BY HIMSELF

VOLS. I AND II

THE CLONMEL SOCIETY

NEW YORK AND LONDON

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INTRODUCTION



INTRODUCTION

STERNE was among the first of our men of letters to be exploited by the press.

The public, naturally enough we should think nowadays, was very curious to know what manner of man was that who had written a book quite unlike any other they had ever read—how he lived, how he looked, and what he said; and information was forthcoming from the hacks of literature who very likely had never seen him. There was, for example,—to mention again what has been described and printed in another place—that first strange notice* from the pen of Dr. John Hill, a notorious London quack-doctor, who must have interviewed Sterne's friends in town for anecdotes half-fact and half-fiction. And after his death Sterne became the theme of more imaginary biography in a larger style. A wit of some ability, who signed himself “Tria Juncta in Uno,

* *Letters and Miscellanies*, Vol. I.

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M.N.A., or Master of No Arts," launched two Shandean volumes under the title of *The Koran*, wherein Sterne is made to talk much of himself in the way of an autobiography. The author of *Tristram Shandy*, according to the fiction, tells the reader all about his relations with his uncle Jaques, and whence were derived my uncle Toby, Le Fevre, and other characters in the gallery of eccentrics. And finally he defends his jests and outspoken style and sets forth his literary plans, now that author and public have become tired of Shandeism. There was to come a "primmer," a little book for the instruction of the nobility and gentry in right conduct; and then a rival to Raleigh's *History of the World*—"an historical account and description of all the several great epochas of the world, from the *creation* to the *conflagration*." As a specimen of what might be done in the final chapters of such a book, Yorick is made to describe the Last Day when the firmament shall be melted down. *The Koran* has been several times printed among the works of Sterne. So late as 1858, it was translated into French by Alfred Hédouin, who had no doubt that it

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was genuine Sterne. The *Revue des Deux Mondes* congratulated the translator on the discovery of this interesting autobiography. The author of *The Koran*, it is now clear, was one Richard Griffith. He betted with a friend that he could write a book that "would pass current on the world as a writing of Mr. Sterne," and he won (so he said) the bet.*

At the request of Sterne's widow and daughter, John Wilkes, the politician, undertook the authorized life of the great humorist. According to the plan that seems to have been agreed upon, John Hall-Stevenson was to collaborate with him; and Lydia Sterne was to place in their hands her father's correspondence and adorn the work with original drawings. Needless to say, the *Life and Correspondence of the Late Rev. Mr. Laurence Sterne*—as the work would doubtless have been called—never materialized. In the years that followed, Wilkes was overwhelmed with public affairs, when out of prison; and Hall-Stevenson, too indolent for sustained literary effort, stopped

* Consult Griffith's Shandean essays entitled *Something New* (1772).

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work, after piecing together a few biographical scraps for a preface to his *Continuation of Yorick's Sentimental Journey*. Lydia Sterne—now Mrs. Medalle—alone remained faithful to the undertaking. In 1775, she published her father's correspondence and the brief memoir of himself that he set down out of love for "my Lydia." The title ran: *Letters of the Late Rev. Mr. Laurence Sterne, to His Most Intimate Friends, with a Fragment in the Manner of Rabelais. To Which are Prefix'd, Memoirs of His Life and Family. Written by Himself.*

It would be difficult to find in the range of literary biography a more shiftless piece of work. How different it is, for example, from that done by Mrs. Barbauld for Richardson! Mrs. Medalle had at hand the most intimate materials. The scant memoir of Sterne's early life down to the publication of *Tristram Shandy* might have been supplemented easily by information from Mrs. Sterne, Hall-Stevenson, and numerous friends at York and in London. The letters covering the period of Sterne's fame might have been woven into a continuous narrative, but no care was taken in the arrangement of them

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and they tell no story. To increase the chaos, the names of Sterne's friends therein mentioned were at best indicated by an initial or two, and they were usually replaced by stars or dashes. Except for a slight continuation of the memoir and a few notes to the letters added to the collected edition of Sterne's works in 1780, not much more was to be known about the great humorist until after the middle of the nineteenth century.

I have not forgotten, of course, the "prefatory memoir" to Sterne's works that Sir Walter Scott wrote for Ballantyne in 1823. It is a striking sketch on the paradox that Sterne is "one of the greatest plagiarists, and one of the most original geniuses, whom England has produced." The sketch is brilliant in color, no doubt just because Scott had few details to build upon. It may aid our insight into the personality of Sterne, but it offers very little new knowledge. To be sure, Scott stretched out his narrative with a most interesting account of La Fleur, the gay valet of Sterne in the sentimental travels through France and Italy. La Fleur, so it is said, married a girl at

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Montreuil much resembling Sterne's Maria, and afterwards took a public house at Calais. The dead donkey, the heart-broken Maria, the grisette at the glove-shop, the *fille de chambre*, "so pretty and petite," are all declared to be no invention of Yorick's. Doubtless this is so, but the details that Scott gave cannot be true. Scott found them in a miscellany of anecdotes called *An Olio* (1814), by William Davis, the bibliographer. Davis, we are asked to believe, met La Fleur at Calais and received direct from him the story of the valet and his master. The bibliographer must have been imposed upon by a smart lackey who knew how to play himself off on credulous Englishmen.

As years went by, the figure of Sterne receded more and more into the past and the unknown. By the middle of the nineteenth century, there remained little more of Sterne than the tradition of a very unclerical parson who had written a book or two that no one should read. "In my youth," wrote the elder D'Israeli in 1840, "the world doted on Sterne. * * * Forty years ago, young men, in their most face-

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tious humours, never failed to find the archetype of society in the Shandy family." But now, of the three great humorists once thought sure of lasting fame, only "Cervantes," D'Israeli went on to say, "is immortal—Rabelais and Sterne have passed away to the curious." A few years more and Bulwer-Lytton could steal the striking incidents of *Tristram Shandy*, clothe them with new circumstance, and remain undiscovered. Then followed Thackeray with his portrait of a "mountebank" and "scamp" that poured forth "cheap dribble" over donkeys and old chaises. And the portrait was accepted as really true. Lytton and Thackeray mark the time when the great public had forgotten their Sterne. Read he was, but mostly by men of letters.

In the meantime some attempt had been made to reconstruct Sterne as he really was, from authentic documents. The distinction of being the first in the field belongs to Charles Athanase Walckenaer, a French scholar and scientist of wide contemporary repute and still remembered. The account of Sterne that Walckenaer contributed to the *Biographie Universelle* in 1825 is indeed

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a slight affair when compared with the fullness of Mr. Fitzgerald. No new knowledge was given beyond an anecdote or two; but Walckenaer pointed out the right way for his successors to pursue. Copious material for a life of Sterne, he saw clearly, lay embedded in the correspondence. Put Sterne's letters into chronological order, restore the proper names that Mrs. Medalle left blank or indicated merely by writing stars; and then you have a biography of Sterne. Lamenting that he could not perform this service for Sterne, Walckenaer wrought out of such knowledge as he had a narrative by far the most substantial that had yet appeared.

During the next quarter-century, some fresh facts about Sterne were discovered and presented to the public. Isaac D'Israeli, as has been related elsewhere, saw the letters of Sterne to Miss Fourmantelle, and five of them he printed in an essay on Sterne.* Then came an article in *The London Quarterly Review* for April, 1854, giving a summary of all that was then known about Sterne. The article in question was from the pen of the editor at that time, the Rev.

* *Literary Miscellanies* (1840).

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Whitwell Elwin. Among Elwin's many excellent contributions to the *Quarterly*, this must be recorded as perhaps the very best. In the manner of Walckenaer, but on a larger scale, the entire career of Sterne and all of his books were reviewed with judicious comment by the way. Here for the first time, Sterne's contemporaries—Gray, Johnson, Walpole, and Goldsmith—were cited and quoted for their opinion of Sterne, the man and author, and a handbook was consulted for following Sterne in London. Anent the charge of plagiarism that Scott insisted upon, it was remarked: "In everything which has made his fame—in his characters, his style, his humour, his pathos—there is no more original writer in the world." Scott took Dr. Ferriar's famous essay on Sterne's plagiarism without question. Elwin subjected it to careful examination.

Such are the more important sketches of Sterne that furnish the historical background to *The Life of Laurence Sterne* that Mr. Percy Fitzgerald published in 1864. Compared with what was then known of Richardson, Fielding, or Smollett, precise knowl-

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edge of Sterne was still scant. He seemed to defy scrutiny. Walckenaer called attention to the fact that neither Sterne nor his friends and biographers had ever mentioned in print the maiden name of Mrs. Sterne. Who was this Miss L——? he inquired, and gave up the search. Elwin thought that the obscurity enveloping Sterne's twenty years at Sutton could never be penetrated. Referring to that period, he said: "Not a single fragment of Sterne's correspondence appears to have been kept by any one of his connexions." These are but indications of the dense ignorance concerning Sterne. Beginning his work with some preliminary studies, Mr. Fitzgerald received glad assistance from many hands. "Every one," he said in the preface to the first edition, "was eager to assist—as though anxious to have part in what might help to clear the name of their great countryman. No one seemed to spare himself in the labour of search, inquiry, or transcription." And when he came to state the result, he could justly say: "As regards materials, the present Life is, I may say, wholly new—new, in some twenty letters never before published—

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new, in many letters which, though printed, have been scattered over the wild prairies of contemporary newspapers and magazines without indexes—new, in extracts from registers and minute-books—new, in numberless traits and facts buried in obscure memoirs of his day. Above all, unexpected light has been thrown upon Sterne's character, and many little incidents in his life, by a diligent study of his own writings." For the "harsh portrait" from the pen of Thackeray was now substituted one in which the lights and shades were mingled more like human nature as we all know it. Mr. Fitzgerald unfortunately never quite forgot Thackeray; he seemed to think that it was necessary to contest all that the great novelist had said about Sterne—to present, as it were, a counter portrait, differing in all respects. In consequence of this strongly reactionary attitude, he slipped easily over difficult passages in Sterne's life, excusing weaknesses and vices and insisting upon the virtues.

The view of Sterne presented by Mr. Fitzgerald was generally accepted -down to near the end of the century. Bagehot,

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Gosse, Traill, Scherer, and a score of other writers but repeated him in the main. Each in turn played the part of special pleader. Had the process of overlooking the vices for the virtues gone on another step, Sterne would have been enrolled among the saints. But Mr. Fitzgerald was to correct the new tradition that he himself had founded. Even before publishing the first edition of his *Life of Sterne*, he had read in one of Thackeray's *Roundabouts** concerning a strange diary that Sterne kept for Eliza after the manner of Swift's *Journal to Stella*. A "gentleman of Bath" had placed the precious document in Thackeray's hands at the time he was preparing lectures on the humourists of the eighteenth century. Thackeray still remembered the incident and wrote about it, but he could not recall the name of the "gentleman of Bath." Some fifteen years later Thomas Washbourne Gibbs—for that was his name—gave an account of the journal and other Sterne manuscripts in his possession to a literary society at Bath. Subsequently all these manuscripts were seen by

* Consult the Introduction to the *Journal to Eliza*.

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Mr. Fitzgerald, who made them the basis of an article on Mrs. Draper for the *Cornhill Magazine*.^{*} By this time it had become clear to Mr. Fitzgerald that his portrait of Sterne needed darker shading. And so he rewrote the book of twenty years before, shearing away questionable pages and adding much that was new.

It is this new *Life of Laurence Sterne* that is here reprinted from the London edition of 1896. Briefer and better in many ways than the earlier work, it is nevertheless not without shortcomings. The fresh manuscript material that led to revision was not used for all that it is worth. It modified the biographer's attitude towards Sterne, but it was not always brought to bear upon obscure passages in Sterne's life for clearing up undoubted mistakes of fact. Mr. Fitzgerald was also sometimes satisfied, it would seem, to accept accounts of Sterne manuscripts in place of direct and careful inspection. Again, he was unacquainted with the letters of John Croft to Caleb Whitefoord descriptive of Sterne's ways in the North just before the

^{*} June, 1887.

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country parson came into fame. These Yorkshire anecdotes,* as I have called them in the reprint, tell us more about Sterne of the Sutton period than all else combined. Besides this, the artistic temperament of Mr. Fitzgerald is somewhat perplexing to writers of less vivid imagination. With him the desire to make his narrative interesting may be so strong that he becomes inaccurate in varying degrees. "It is curious," he says, for example, "that three such famous books as *Rasselas*, *Candide* and *Tristram Shandy* should have appeared almost in the same month." *Rasselas* and *Candide* did indeed appear in March, but *Tristram Shandy* was then only in the first stages of composition. It was not published until December, as the biographer of course well knew. Akin to this imaginative rendering of fact as something better than fact itself, is a tendency with Mr. Fitzgerald to fuse in memory different incidents and times. An instance in point is the description of Sterne's "last sermon"†—the sermon he preached before the Duke of York after

* *Letters and Miscellanies*, Vol. I.

† Vol. II., Ch. VIII.

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“the great races” of 1766. It had been a gala week in the cathedral city. “The concourse of people of all sorts during the race,” so ran the account sent up to London for the newspapers,* “exceeded by far that of your Cornelys’s, which I was at last winter. The sums won and lost here must have been immense, for, by a moderate calculation, there is left behind for subscriptions, lodgings, and necessary expenses, upwards of 10,000*l*. Even the Playhouse (which is the most elegant I have seen out of London) took above 500*l*. in the week, and the night the Duke ordered they took 100*l*. and upwards. The Ladies, who vied in splendor with each other, I thought would never be tired with dancing, for some begun on Monday and continued till Saturday night.” After the dancing came Sterne’s sermon. “On Sunday,” I quote again from the newspapers,* “his Royal Highness the Duke of York went to the Minster, where he was received at the West Door by the Residentiary and Choir, the Lord Mayor, Recorder, and Aldermen, who

* *St. James Chronicle* for August 26–28, 1766. The same article appeared in other newspapers.

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ushered him up to the Archbishop's Throne, where he heard an excellent Discourse from the Rev. Mr. Sterne." A gorgeous scene surely, just as it stands, for what may indeed have been Sterne's last sermon; but through some confusion Mr. Fitzgerald enlivens the occasion by the presence of "the young King of Denmark," who "was making a progress through England" in company with the Duke of York. It was he and not the Duke, according to Mr. Fitzgerald, who sat on the Archbishop's throne in the Minster. "The young King of Denmark," as one may see on consulting the biographical dictionaries, was married to Caroline Matilda, sister to the Duke of York, in October, 1766, but the marriage was by proxy. His Majesty kept in Denmark. The royal progress through England that Mr. Fitzgerald had in mind took place in the summer of 1768, some months after the death of "the Rev. Mr. Sterne."

In reprinting the *Life of Laurence Sterne* with this edition of his works, the editor has interpreted liberally Mr. Fitzgerald's permission to "use my Sterne life in any way that suits you." No changes, of course, have been

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made in the text except for the correction of errors that were clearly due to the printer, and they do not exceed a half-dozen. But such mistakes in fact as the author has made or seems to have made are recorded in footnotes, separated from the author's own footnotes by brackets. These corrections, however, do not extend to the quotations from letters and other Sterne documents, which are left precisely as Mr. Fitzgerald left them. To this plan, however, one exception has been made. The Latin letter from Sterne to John Hall-Stevenson, which was mutilated by the printers beyond recognition, has been collated with the text of the first edition. Finally, it has seemed best to explain some of the more obscure allusions, such as those to books and authors now no longer read by the general public.

W. L. C.

NOTE

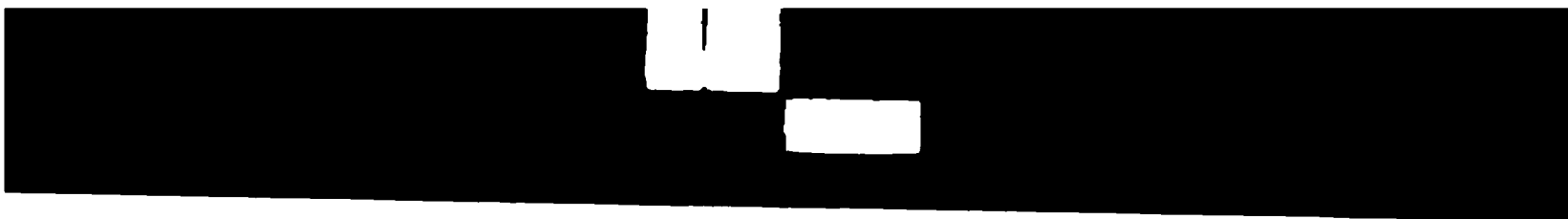
The present work is founded on a previous life of Sterne by the same author. It is in great part rewritten and contains much fresh material.

Inscribed

TO THE

REV. WHITWELL ELWIN

RECTOR OF BOOTON, NORWICH.



P R E F A C E

MANY years ago I wrote an account of Sterne, the first attempt that had been made at supplying a life of the great humorist. The materials were scanty enough, but I was fortunate in securing a large number of unpublished letters and other important matter. I was still more fortunate in receiving the advice and assistance of my old and valued friend the late Mr John Forster. The Rev. Whitwell Elwin, his friend and mine, an acute and accomplished critic, and the author of what is the best account of Sterne, also helped me with a number of useful suggestions and profuse references, such as only one of his vast reading could supply.

Many years, as I have said, have elapsed since the appearance of this work, and, as was to be expected, a quantity of fresh materials, letters and other MSS. have come to light. I have now almost entirely rewritten

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the book, which may be practically considered a new life. Letters of Sterne are scarce and costly, yet I have gathered here a great number of new and interesting documents hitherto unpublished. I would point particularly to the long and interesting letter in which Sterne vindicates himself from the charge of neglect of and cruelty to his mother; to the extracts from the strange journal kept for Eliza; to the 'characteristical' notes in the Halifax school book; and to many other curious records.

I have been obliged, however, to modify the too favourable opinion I entertained of Sterne's life and character, and am constrained to admit that Mr Thackeray's view—harsh as it may seem—had much to support it. Yorick's Journal which I have read through carefully, is fatally damaging; exhibiting a repulsive combination of Phari-saical utterances and lax principle. This would seem to show that Mr Sterne was something more than the mere 'philanderer' he described himself to be. Mr Elwin was long ago constrained to adopt the same view. Indeed, it may be always fairly presumed that licentious writing is almost cer-

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tain to be followed by life and practice as licentious.

Many critics and writers of eminence—Mr Carlyle, M. Taine, Mr Elwin, Mr Traill—have tried to analyse Sterne's style and methods, contrasting him with Rabelais, Cervantes, Fielding and Dickens. The truth is, our author was so capricious and even fragmentary and disorderly in his system that comparison is impossible. The writers just named were really 'monumental' in their handling of their characters, and completed their labour before issuing it to the world. Sterne sent forth his work in fragments, and often wrote what was sheer nonsense to fill his volumes. He allowed his pen to lead him, instead of he himself directing his pen. The whole is so incomplete and disjointed that cosmopolitan readers have not the time or patience to piece the various scraps together. But, as I have shown in the text—and this, I am convinced, is the true view—he has given to the world a group of living *characters*, which have become known and familiar even to those who have not read a line of *Tristram*. These are My Uncle Toby, Mr

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and Mrs Shandy, Yorick—his own portrait—and Dr Slop. There are choice passages, too, grotesque situations and expressions which have become part of the language. Mr Shandy, I venture to think, is the best of these creations, more piquant and attractive even than My Uncle Toby, because more original and more difficult to touch. It is in this way that Sterne has made his mark, and may be said to be better known than read.

A great deal has been written on the false and overstrained sentiment of his pathetic passages such as in the ‘Story of Le Fever,’ ‘Maria of Moulines,’ ‘The Dead Ass,’ and other incidents. No doubt these were somewhat artificially wrought, but it must be remembered they followed the tone of the time. His exquisite humour is beyond dispute, the Shandean sayings, allusions, topics, etc., have a permanent hold; and, as they recur to the recollection, produce a complacent smile, even though the subject be what is called ‘broad.’ No better type of his humour could be given than the one quoted by Mr Elwin,—“‘I have left Trim my bowling-green,” said My

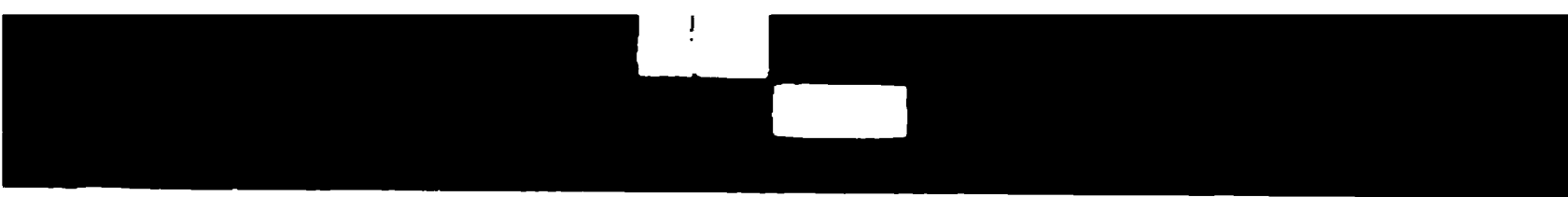
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Uncle Toby. My father smiled. "I have also left him a small pension." My father looked grave.' In this stroke there is not merely humour, but a deep knowledge of character.

I would refer those who would enter on a critical study of Sterne's writings to Mr Elwin's searching article in the *Quarterly Review* (Vol. XCIV.), to Taine's well-known criticisms, to Mr Traill's little account in the 'English Men of Letters' series, founded ostensibly on my *Life of Sterne*, and to M. Paul Stapfer's Essay, also founded on the same work. There is also an elaborate examination of the book in the *Revue des Deux Mondes* by an eminent Frenchman.

PERCY FITZGERALD.

ATHENÆUM CLUB,
February 1896.



LIFE OF STERNE



CHILDHOOD AND SCHOOLDAYS



LIFE OF STERNE

CHAPTER I

CHILDHOOD AND SCHOOLDAYS

IN one of his more familiar passages, Sterne thus speaks of his family:—

‘This is the reason,’ he says, ‘that . . . for these four generations we count no more than one archbishop, a Welsh judge, some three or four aldermen, and a single mountebank.’ The archbishop was a notable prelate—of the Welsh judge but little or nothing is known. But the term ‘mountebank’ was often applied to the humorist; indeed, he once chose to be painted in that character.

Archbishop Richard Sterne* was an ardent loyalist, and took the side of the King

* Born, 1596; master of Jesus College, Cambridge, 1633; Bishop of Carlisle, 1660; translated to York, 1664; died, 1683. [The exact date of the archbishop’s birth is unknown. He was elected master of Jesus College on March 7, 1633–4.]

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in the Civil Wars. He sent the college plate to His Majesty, for which he was seized by Cromwell and imprisoned. He endured much persecution, being hooted and stoned by the crowd, and actually shipped in a collier to be sold—it was so believed—as a slave to the Algerians. Escaping this fate, he attended Laud to the scaffold. When the good times returned he was, of course, rewarded for his constancy and trials. He, later, assisted in revising the Book of Common Prayer, and has been suggested as one of the many authors of *The Whole Duty of Man*. When he died, Burnet wrote of him with some bitterness that ‘he was a sour, ill-tempered divine, and minded chiefly the enrichment of his family. He was suspected of popery.’ Of the archbishop’s thirteen children, the eldest, Richard, was established at Elvington in Yorkshire, and had married a Yorkshire heiress, Miss Jaques, daughter of Sir Roger Jaques. The Sternes, indeed, were well connected on all sides, being allied with the Rawdons and other high county families. From another son, John, was descended the Irish

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branch, connected with the Hills of Kilmallock. Of the thirteen, the one we are most interested in is, of course, Roger, described by his son Laurence as 'a lieutenant in Handasyd's Regiment,' or the 22d. We also find his name in the 84th or Cornwallis's, so he may have served in both corps. As all readers know, he saw much of the Flanders wars, and his little son heard many a story of these stirring times, which he put into the mouth of Uncle Toby and his Corporal Trim. A short time before his death, after a lapse of nigh fifty years, these childish recollections came vividly back to the Reverend Laurence, and he drew up for his daughter a short and tolerably accurate sketch of his early life. If 'jerky' in style, it is a very dramatic bit of narrative, and tells us all that is wanting. 'Roger Sterne,' he begins abruptly, 'was married to Agnes Hebert, widow of a captain of good family. Her family name was (I believe) Nuttle, though upon recollection that was the name of her father-in-law,' (how characteristic this; he would not pause to correct or re-write his first statement), 'who was a noted sutler in Flanders, in

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Queen Anne's wars, where my father married his wife's daughter (*N.B.*—He was in debt to him), which was in September 25, 1711, old style. This Nuttle had a son by my grandmother—a fine person of a man, but a graceless whelp—what became of him I know not. The family (if any left) live now at Clonmel in the South of Ireland.'

From this we gather that the improvident lieutenant actually married when on campaign—married a widow, too—and under pressure. '*N.B.*—He was in debt to him.' The son makes a natural mistake in calling Nuttle her father-in-law, whereas he was merely her stepfather. The name may have been Herbert, but there is a French name Hèbert. I am inclined to think that this lady was herself of foreign extraction from the later troubles she brought on her son, and the sort of hysterical persecution she subjected him to. In Sterne's face, too, there was something of a foreign cast.

One daughter had been born abroad, and another child was expected when the regiment was ordered to Clonmel, the war being now over.

'At which town,' goes on the little story,

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‘I was born, November 24th, 1718, a few days after my mother arrived from Dunkirk. My birthday was ominous to my poor father, who was, the day after our arrival, with many other brave officers, broke, and sent adrift into the wide world with a wife and two children.’ The Shandean touch here — ‘*our* arrival’ — will be noted. The elder was Mary; ‘she was born in Lisle, in French Flanders, July 10th, 1712, new style.’ (Mr Sterne must have had his family Bible open before him as he wrote):— ‘This child was most unfortunate; she married one Wimmins in Dublin, who used her most unmercifully, spent his substance, became a bankrupt, and left my poor sister to shift for herself, which she was able to do but for a few months, for she went to a friend’s house in the country and died of a broken heart. She was a most beautiful woman, of a fine figure, and deserved a better fate.

‘. . . . The regiment in which my father served being broke, he left Ireland as soon as I was able to be carried with the rest of his family, and came to the family seat at Elvington, near York, where his mother lived.

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She was daughter to Sir Roger Jaques, and an heiress. There we sojourned for about ten months, when the regiment was established, and our household decamped with bag and baggage for Dublin. Within a month of our arrival, my father left us, being ordered to Exeter, where in a sad winter, my mother and her two children followed him, travelling from Liverpool by land to Plymouth. (Melancholy description of this journey not necessary to be transcribed here.) In twelve months we were all sent back to Dublin. My mother, with three of us (for she lay in at Plymouth of a boy, Joram), took ship at Bristol for Ireland, and had a narrow escape from being cast away, by a leak springing up in the vessel. At length, after many perils and struggles, we got to Dublin. There my father took a large house, furnished it, and in a year and a half's time spent a great deal of money.'

The regiment now known as Chudleigh's Thirty-fourth—that officer having succeeded Colonel Hamilton—was reformed in Dublin. We have the list of officers now before us, with even the uniform they wore.—

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The colonel was Chudleigh, the lieutenant-colonel, Whitney, the major, Charles Douglas: the captains were Hayes, Dawes, Doige, Moore, Matys, Shelton and Pyott: the lieutenants, Sanbeyeres, Yard, Cooksay, Brereton, Hamilton, Tremaine, Batten, Phillips, White, Hayes and Ford: the ensigns, Sirck, *Roger Sterne*, Sutton, Shaddy, Bilson, Parker, Price and Wickham. Only an ensign, after all his campaigns and wanderings! They wore a tri-cornered hat, a full-skirted, scarlet coat, turned up with the brightest yellow facings, a scarlet waistcoat, white trimmings and white gaiters.*

In Dublin he presently found many of his name. Here was the Bishop of Dro-more, Enoch Sterne, later Swift's friend, with Henry Baker Sterne, both clerks to the Parliament. On Ormond quay we find the firm of Nuttall & M'Guire, the former possibly a connection of the ensign's wife.

'In the year 1719,' goes on the story, 'all unhinged again, the regiment was ordered, with many others, to the Isle of Wight, in order to embark for Spain in the Vigo Expedition. We accompanied the

* From War Office Records.

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regiment, and were driven into Milford Haven, but landed at Bristol, from thence by land to Plymouth again, and to the Isle of Wight—where I remember we stayed encamped some time before the embarkation of the troops—(in this expedition from Bristol to Hampshire we lost poor Joram—a pretty boy, four years old, of the small-pox). My mother, sister and myself remained at the Isle of Wight during the Vigo Expedition, and until the regiment had got back to Wicklow in Ireland, from whence my father sent for us. We had poor Joram's loss supplied during our stay in the Isle of Wight by the birth of a girl, Anne, born September 28d, 1719. This pretty blossom fell at the age of three years, in the barracks of Dublin; she was, as I well remember, of a fine, delicate frame, not made to last long, as were most of my father's babes. We embarked for Dublin, and had all been cast away by a most violent storm, but through the intercessions of my mother, the captain was prevailed upon to turn back into Wales, where we stayed a month, and at length got into Dublin, and travelled by land to Wicklow,

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where my father had for some weeks given us over for lost. We lived in the barracks at Wicklow one year (1720) when Devijeher (so called after Colonel Devijeher) was born; from thence we decamped to stay half a year with Mr Fetherston, a clergyman, about seven miles from Wicklow, who, being a relation of my mother's, invited us to his parsonage at Animo. It was in this parish, during our stay, that I had that wonderful escape in falling through a mill-race whilst the mill was going, and of being taken up unhurt. The story is incredible, but known for truth in all that part of Ireland, where hundreds of the common people flocked to see me. From hence we followed the regiment to Dublin, where we lay in the barracks a year. In this year, 1721, I learned to write, etc. The regiment, ordered in 1722 to Carrickfergus in the North of Ireland, we all decamped, but got no further than Drogheda, thence ordered to Mullingar, forty miles west, where by Providence we stumbled upon a kind relation, a collateral descendant from Archbishop Sterne, who took us all to his castle and kindly entreated us for a year, and sent

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us to the regiment at Carrickfergus, loaded with kindnesses, etc. A most rueful and tedious journey had we all, in March, to Carrickfergus, where we arrived in six or seven days. Little Devijeher here died; he was three years old. He had been left behind at nurse at a farmhouse near Wicklow, but was fetched to us by my father the summer after. Another child sent to fill his place, Susan; this babe too left us behind in this weary journey.'

All which is a most piteous story, and yet dramatic. The poor ensign must have been well-nigh crushed and heart-broken as he dragged about his family from place to place, pausing only for some fresh addition to his burdens. The little Laurence's wonderful escape from the mill-wheel was, curiously enough anticipated in the case of his great-grandfather, who, we are told, 'playing near a mill, fell within a clow. There was but one board or bucket wanting in the whole wheel, but a gracious Providence so ordered it that the void place came down at that moment, else he had been inevitably crushed to death.' His descendant probably enough transferred this accident to himself,

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though his account had all the particularity of personal recollection—the people crowding to see him—and which is truly national.

It was now determined to put Laurence, who was about eleven years old, to school. At Halifax, close to Heath, was a free grammar school, founded by Queen Elizabeth, principally for the benefit of children from the parish and district of Halifax; but the master was allowed to take a number of pupils to board, not upon the foundation. At this school was young Tristram 'fixed' by his father. The choice was natural. We find 'Richard Sterne, Esquire,' in the year 1727, one of the governors. Squire Simon had been buried in Halifax Church; and young Laurence could be fairly placed upon the foundation, as a child of the parish.

Laurence, then eleven years old, must have brought with him learning sufficient 'to read English, and to be promoted to the Accidence,' according to the quaint provision of the charter.

His master was Mr Thomas Lister.

'The autumn of that year, or the spring after, I forget which,' goes on the story, 'my father got leave of his colonel to fix

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me at school, which he did near Halifax with an able master with whom I stayed some time.'

This compliment the master well-deserved, for at least his judgment and sagacity, witness this instance.

'I remained at Halifax till about the latter end of that year (1781), and cannot omit mentioning this anecdote of myself and schoolmaster. We had had the ceiling of the schoolroom new whitewashed—the ladder remained there. I one unlucky day mounted it and wrote with a brush in large capital letters LAU. STERNE, for which the usher severely whipped me. My master was very much hurt at this, and said before me, that never should that name be effaced, for I was a boy of genius and he was sure I would come to preferment. This expression made me forget the stripes I had received.' No doubt the master saw here some ardour for reputation.

The boys too, could admire the spirit of their daring companion. A Colonel Longridge, who came to the school shortly after Sterne left, saw the inscription still uneffaced. There were then traditions among

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the boys of the lad's cleverness and wit. Some of his sayings even were repeated. The schoolroom still remains with the great oak beam across the ceiling on which the name had been inscribed.

Many years ago there was placed in the writer's hands an interesting 'curio,' no other, indeed, than one of Laurence's school-books. Its title was *Synopsis Communium Locorum ex Poetis Latinis Collecta*, and more characteristic evidence of the erratic character of the boy could not be imagined. It was a soiled, dirty book, every page scrawled over with writing, sketches, repetitions of his own name and those of his fellows—'L. S., 1728,' the letters being sometimes twisted together in the shape of a monogram. On the title-page, in faint brown characters, was written, in straggling fashion, the owner's name: 'Law: Sterne, September ye 6, 1725.' We find also some of his schoolfellows' names, such as 'Christopher Welbery,' 'John Turner' (a Yorkshire name), 'Richard Carre, ejus liber,' 'John Walker,' with '*Nickibus Nonkebus, rorum rarum*,' etc. There is a stave of notes, with the 'sol fa,' etc., written be-

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low, and signed 'L. S.' Then we come on this:—'*I owe Samuel Thorpe one halfpenny, but I will pay him to-day.*' On another page we read '*labour takes panes,*' 'John Davie,' 'Bill Copper,' the latter, no doubt, a school nickname. But on nearly every page of this dog-eared volume was some rude drawing or sketch done after the favourite school-boy rules of art. One curious, long-nosed, long-chinned face has written over it, '*This is Lorence,*' and there is certainly a coarse suggestion of the later chin and nose of the humorist. There are owls, and cocks and hens, etc., a picture of 'A gentleman,' and several, as we might expect, of soldiers, one, especially, in the curious sugar-loaf cap seen in the picture of the 'March to Finchley,' with the wig and short-stock gun and strap. We find also some female faces, early evidence, perhaps, of our hero's later tastes. Then we come on the words 'A drummer,' 'A piper,' and this compliment, '*puding John Gillington.*' Sometimes the name which figures everywhere is spelled 'Law: Sterne—his book.'

Mr Thackeray, who had no love for Sterne, describes him at this period fanci-

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fully enough:—‘Yonder lean, cadaverous lad, who is always borrowing money, telling lies, leering at the housemaids, is Master Laurence Sterne, a bishop’s grandson, and himself intended for the Church. For shame, you little reprobate! But what a genius the fellow has! He shall have a sound flogging, and as soon as the young scamp is out of the whipping-room give him a gold medal. Such would be my practice were I Doctor Birch, and master of the school.’

A morning paper, published long after, when he was grown up and famous, furnishes a bare line or so in reference to this school time. ‘At school,’ it runs, ‘he would learn when he pleased, and not oftener than once a fortnight.’

While he was at the school the sad news of his father’s death reached him. It overtook the worn and weary soldier in the midst of fresh wanderings. ‘To pursue the thread of my story,’ his son writes, ‘my father’s regiment was, the year after, ordered to Londonderry, where another sister was brought forth—Catherine, still living, but most unhappily estranged from me by

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my uncle's wickedness and her own folly. From this station the regiment was sent to defend Gibraltar at the siege, where my father was run through the body by Captain Philips* in a duel. (The quarrel began about a goose.) With much difficulty he survived—though with an impaired constitution, which was not able to withstand the hardships it was put to, for he was sent to Jamaica, where he soon fell by the country fever, which took away his senses first, and made a child of him, and then, in a month or two, walking about continually without complaining, till the moment he sat down in an arm-chair and breathed his last, which was at Port Antonio, on the north of the island. My father was a little, smart man—active to the last degree in all exercises, most patient of fatigue and disappointments of which it pleased God to give him full measure. He was in temper somewhat rapid and hasty, *but of a kindly, sweet disposition, void of all design, and so innocent in his intentions that he suspected no one, while you might have cheated him ten times in a day*

* Philips' name occurs in the list of officers in Chudleigh's regiment as Christopher Philips.

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if nine had not been sufficient for your purpose. My poor father died in March, 1781.'

This sketch, in spite of its disjointed style, is as masterly as anything in his efficient writings. But how clearly the underlined passages show from what original my Uncle Toby was drawn.

The whole sketch of the father's nature is happily embodied in the 'most patient of fatigue and disappointments' of which he had, indeed, the fullest measure. No doubt there were many instances told in the family of his simplicity and amiable credulousness. It was on this element of character that the writer seized, and he wrote up and elaborated it in his own admirable fashion. Another side of the character—the patience of suffering and hardship—was given in the story of Le Fever, whose pathetic end came about exactly harmonious with that of the poor lieutenant.

Many years ago,* Mr. Ball, writing in *Macmillan's Magazine*, gives an account of Preston Castle in Hertfordshire. He adds

* [July, 1873.]

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this speculation as to the original of my Uncle Toby:—

‘In the day of Laurence Sterne,’ he says, ‘the owner of Preston Castle was a certain Captain Hinde, who was at once the old soldier and the country gentleman. My father, who lived near the village of Preston, was told by the late Lord Dacre, of The Hoo, in Hertfordshire, that this Captain Hinde “was Sterne’s Uncle Toby.” My father ascertained that the fact was well known to the Lord Dacre of the “Tristram Shady” period, and had been transmitted in the Dacre family from father to son. His lordship added, that a very old man named Pilgrim, who had spent his young days in the service of Captain Hinde, might be found some few miles from The Hoo. My father sought an interview with Pilgrim, the venerable patriarch of a lonely little village, and in the course of a long conversation gathered evidence which clearly traced my Uncle Toby to a real-life residence at Preston Castle. Pilgrim, in his youth, had an uncle who was butler at The Hoo, some five miles from Preston. This uncle well

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remembered the famous Mr Sterne as one of Lord Dacre's visitors, and once heard him conversing with his noble host about "Tristram Shandy."

"My Uncle Toby was drawn from life," said Mr Sterne. "It is the portrait of your lordship's neighbour, Captain Hinde."

'Pilgrim told of the sayings and doings of his old master. Captain Hinde was a veritable Uncle Toby. He gave an embattled front to his house—the labourers on his land were called from the harvest-field by notes of the bugle, and a battery was placed at the end of his garden.

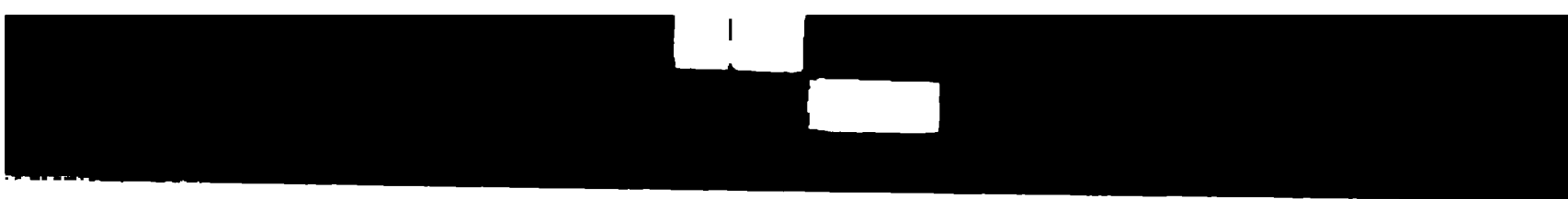
'He had the most extraordinary love for all living things. Finding that a bullfinch had built her nest in the garden hedge, close to his battery, he specially ordered his men not to fire the guns until the little birds had flown. To fire these guns was his frequent amusement, but he would not allow a sound to disturb the feathered family.'

Lord Dacre certainly was a friend of Sterne's, and on the whole I think we may accept the theory that Sterne grafted on the sketch of his father these particular humours

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of Captain Hinde. It is clear that his father would have no opportunity of exhibiting such pleasing eccentricities.

**DR JAQUES STERNE AND
HIS NEPHEW**



CHAPTER II.

DR JAQUES STERNE AND HIS NEPHEW.

BY the time Laurence left Halifax School, he was close upon nineteen. The position of the widow and her children was almost critical. She had, however, well-to-do connections, one of whom took care of Laurence. Some pittance,* however, must have been left to her, for I find that in August 18th, 1782, she took out administration in the Irish Court, in which instrument her name and those of her three children, Maria, Catherine and Laurence, are given.

His cousin, Richard Sterne of Elvington, now, as he says, 'became a father to me, sent me to the university, etc.'—the odd 'etcetera' standing for much more kindly aid in the shape of money. He was entered at Jesus College,† Cambridge, and his tutor was Mr Cannon.

*[A pension of 20l. a year.]

† Dr Corrie, the master, long since dead, kindly furnished me with the details connected with Sterne's residence here.

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On July 6th, 1738, he obtained a sizarship, and on July 30th of the following year he was elected scholar on Archbishop Sterne's foundation—of course, a sort of family compliment. The only one of his college friends whose name has reached us was John Hall Stevenson, who was also to obtain celebrity for his loose writings. ' 'Twas there,' says Sterne, 'that I commenced a friendship with Mr H—— which has been most lasting on both sides.' He was 'a gay spirited youth,' according to Mr Cole, the antiquary. 'Tom Hall I recollect well at college, where he was an ingenious young gentleman, and very handsome.' It is odd that he does not recall his more brilliant and equally 'ingenious' companion. In a letter, *Morning Post* memoir, it is stated that 'he read a great deal, laughed more, and sometimes took the diversion of puzzling his tutors. He left Cambridge with the character of an odd man, who had no harm in him, and who had parts, if he would use them.' It was at Cambridge that he had the first of those pulmonary attacks—the breaking of a blood-vessel in his chest—which clung to him steadily all

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the rest of his life. He had a narrow escape, and recollected it long after. And it must be borne in mind, when we come to weigh any shortcomings, what frail, feeble frames his parents furnished to their young family; and how he only, and the scapegrace sister, as she may be called, escaped shipwreck out of all the Devijehers, Jorams, and the rest, that put out to sea with him. On the 29th of March, 1735, he matriculated, and in the January of the following year he took his Bachelor's degree.

On the 6th of March, 1736, the Dr Richard Reynolds, Bishop of Lincoln, was ordaining deacons at Buckden, in Huntingdonshire, and among the candidates was a thin, spare, hollow-chested youth, with curiously bright eyes, and a Voltairean mouth, who had come from Jesus College, Cambridge. The name of the new deacon was Laurence Sterne, B.A., from Yorkshire. Previously, his University had granted to him the usual testimonials for Orders, which were dated on the 28th of February, 1736. Finally, at the quaint and almost Shandean town of Chester, it may be mentioned in anticipation, that on 20th of August, 1738,

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he was ordained priest, by Dr Samuel Peploe, then Bishop of Chester, and became the Reverend Laurence Sterne.

Through the interest of his uncle, Dr Jaques Sterne, a person of great importance, political and local, our new clergyman was appointed to a vicarage close to York. Ordained on August 20th, he was, on the 25th, inducted into the living of Sutton on the Trent; it was in the gift of Archbishop Blackburne. In July 1740 he took his Master's degree. In this year, his uncle also obtained for him a Prebend in York Cathedral, worth about £40 a year; with this he also held the minor Prebend of Pocklington, worth only £10. But he had a house in Stonegate, near the archbishop's palace, where he could come 'into residence.' *

York was then a pleasant city to live in, with a theatre that had some reputation; families came 'for the season,' and there was plenty of winter gaieties, and balls at the Assembly Rooms. No place, however,

* The late Mr Durrant Cooper, F.S.A., furnished me with these and many other important details. He possessed Sterne's letters of ordination which are now in the British Museum.

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could be more full of local jealousies and political turmoil. Much of this was owing to a leading character of the place, the Dr Jaques Sterne alluded to. Jaques Sterne was one of the sons of Simon Sterne, and next in order to the late Roger Sterne. He was named Jaques after Sir Roger, the father of the heiress. He figures in the fierce election contests of the day, was a strong 'no popery' man; he was, as I have said, a great pluralist. He was a Canon Residentiary, a Prebendary, and Precentor of York Cathedral—the precentorship coming to him in the year 1735, by way of guerdon for the election services of the preceding year. He was, besides, Rector of Rise, and Rector of Hornsea-cum-Ritson in the East Riding—offices slender, it must be confessed, in their emoluments, but still acceptable. By-and-by, in the year 1746, came the Archdeaconry of Cleveland, and, ten years later, he was Prebendary of Durham, and, in 1750, Archdeacon of the East Riding.

There are some letters preserved of this persevering churchman's, which show in an amusing way how eager he was in prosecuting his interests when any opening offered.

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He thus wrote to one of his political patrons:—

MY LORD,—The Archbishop of Canterbury having some time ago applied to your Grace in my favour, for succeeding Dr Hayter in his Prebend at Westminster, when it should become vacant by his promotion, I hope your Grace will pardon my application, upon Dr Hayter's present promotion. I am very sensible it does but ill become me to mention to your Grace how often, and at what a vast expense, I have, for a number of years, been using my best endeavours for promoting His Majesty's service in this country. But I hope your Grace will the more readily excuse my naming it, since I was so happy as to hear your Grace express your approbation of my behaviour, when you acquainted his present Grace of Canterbury, then Archbishop of York, how the Deanery of York was disposed of, and was pleased to add, that though I could not receive that mark of the King's favour, yet that some other was intended for me. There is no doubt but your Grace will have many applications for this Prebend, but if your

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Grace is inclined to honour me with your notice at this time, there can't long be wanting an opportunity, from Dr Manningham's ill state of health, of distinguishing any other person whom your Grace is pleased to think of also.—I am, my lord, with all duty, your Grace's most obedient, humble servant.

'YORK, *Oct. the 14th*, 1749.'

The obsequious divine used some ingenious arts to propitiate the man whom he was importuning.

'MAY IT PLEASE YOUR GRACE,'—he wrote to the Duke of Newcastle—'The Vicarage of Alborough is become vacant, which I made my option some time ago, that I might secure a clerk agreeable to your Grace in your own borough. I shall await your Grace's commands, and I am, my Lord, with all duty, your Grace's most obedient, humble servant,

JAQUES STERNE.

'BATH, *May 18*, 1750.'

We find that a few months later the minister was pleased to accept this form of compliment:—

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‘MY LORD,—In obedience to your Grace’s commands, which were signified to me by the Archbishop of York, Mr Goodricke, the clerk whom Mr William recommended has been collated to the Vicarage of Alborough. I take the liberty of acquainting your Grace with this instance of my duty, and shall continue to make the same living my option, that, if any future occasion offers itself, I may have again the honour of receiving your commands about it.—Being, my Lord, your Grace’s most dutiful and most obedient servant,

JAQUES STERNE.

‘YORK, *Nov.* 10, 1750.’

It was foolish of the nephew to quarrel with so valuable a patron. But Laurence was too independent or perhaps too mercurial to become a mere creature or tool.

‘My uncle and myself,’ he tells us, ‘were then upon very good terms, for he soon got me the Prebend of York; but he quarrelled with me afterwards, because I would not write paragraphs in the newspapers. Though he was a party-man, I was not, and detested such dirty work, thinking it beneath me. From that period, he became my bitterest

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enemy. By my wife's means I got the living of Stillington. A friend of hers in the south had promised her, that if she married a clergyman in Yorkshire, when the living became vacant he would make her a compliment of it.

'I remained near twenty years at Sutton, doing duty at both places. I had then very good health. Books, painting, fiddling and shooting were my amusements; as to the 'Squire of the parish, I cannot say we were upon a very friendly footing, but at Stillington the family of the C——s (Crofts) showed us every kindness, 'twas most truly agreeable to be within a mile and a half of an amiable family, who were ever cordial friends. In the year 1760, I took a house at York for your mother and yourself, and went up to London to publish my two first volumes of Shandy. In that year Lord Falconbridge presented me with the curacy of Coxwold, a sweet retirement comparison of Sutton. In sixty-two I went to France before the peace was concluded, and you both followed me. I left you both in France, and two years after I went to Italy for the recovery of my health, and when I called upon you,

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I tried to engage your mother to return to England with me—she and yourself are at length come, and I have had the inexpressible joy of seeing my girl everything I wished her.

‘I have set down these particulars, relating to my family and self, for my Lydia, in case hereafter she might have a curiosity, or a kinder motive, to know them.’

Thus concludes the quaint and vivacious little sketch which we could wish longer.

**LOVE-MAKING AND MARRIED
LIFE**



CHAPTER III

LOVE-MAKING AND MARRIED LIFE

MR. STERNE, who was destined through life to be eminent in what are called 'affairs of the heart,' had not been long in York before he fell in love. The Lady of his affections was Miss Elizabeth Lumley, and in his autobiography he gives this sketch of the affair. 'At York I became acquainted with your mother, and courted her for two years. She owned she liked me, but thought herself not rich enough, or me too poor, to be joined together. She went to her sister's in S——, and I wrote to her often. I believe then she was partly determined to have me, but would not say so. At her return she fell into a consumption, and one evening that I was sitting by her with an almost broken heart to see her so ill, she said, "My dear Lawry, I can never be yours, for I verily believe I have not long to live, but I have

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left you every shilling of my fortune.” Upon that she showed me her will. This generosity overpowered me. It pleased God that she recovered, and I married her in the year 1741.’

Miss Lumley—‘My L.’ as she is called in the letters—came from Staffordshire, where she had a small property. Her father was Rector of Bedal. She is said to have had a ‘fine voice’ and a good taste in music. Some forty years later, his daughter published her father’s love letters to her mother, and incurred much censure for her ‘indelicacy’ in so doing. But it should be said that Mrs Sterne herself had stipulated that if any letters of her husband were published these should be included. This daughter introduces them with this odd apology,—

‘In justice to Mr Sterne’s delicate feelings, I must here publish the following letters to Mrs Sterne, before he married her, when she was in Staffordshire. A good heart breathes in every line of them.’

The intimacy of the lovers was fostered by the aid and sympathy of a true confidante. This lady—who in some way recalls the gloomy mediatrix between Dora and

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David Copperfield—is only known to us as ‘The good Miss S——.’

Her friend had a sort of rustic retreat outside York—‘a little, sungilt cottage on the side of a romantic hill’—to which he had given the fanciful name of ‘D’Estella.’ It was decorated with an abundant growth of ‘roses and jessamines.’ At other times Miss Lumley had ‘lodgings’ in York, where she resided by herself, and gave little ‘quiet and sentimental repasts’ to her lover. ‘Fanny,’ the parlour-maid of the lodgings, who used to wait at these quiet and sentimental repasts; and she, with Miss S——, unknown to posterity, makes up the quartette of actors in the lovesick little piece. Long, long after—when Mr Sterne had lived nearly all his life—it would seem as though the memory of these days had come back to him pleasantly, for he christened one of his Shandean characters ‘The Curate D’Estella.’

When Mr Sterne came to York for his term of residence he lived in rooms in Stonegate. Long after—some thirty years after the humorist’s death—a young and struggling actor, the first Charles Mathews, found himself in York, a member of Tate

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Williams's company. With his wife, he was lodging in an old house in Stonegate which was known to be the house which Sterne occupied when he came to stay in York. The local tradition was that he had written his *Tristram Shandy* here, but this, of course, was hardly likely. It was difficult, however, to find a tenant for these quarters, as they had the reputation of being haunted; but the actor and wife, being very poor, could not afford to despise the accommodation, which was excellent and eke cheap. On the first night of their occupation, as the Minster clock tolled midnight, they were startled by three vivid knocks on the panel, and this visitation continued every night, until they at last became quite accustomed to it. No examination, however minute, could discover the cause; it at last ceased, and, curiously enough, simultaneously with the death of an old strolling actor named 'Billy Leng,' who lodged in the house. It turned out that this man, being bedridden, every night when he heard the Minster clock, used to strike three blows with his crutch on the floor to summon his wife to attend on him.

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For two years it went on. They were as 'merry and as innocent as our first parents in Paradise, before the archfiend *entered that undescrivable scene*,' when suddenly it went forth that 'My L.' must return forthwith to Staffordshire, to her sister Lydia, afterwards married to 'The Rev. Mr Botham, Rector of Albany, in Surrey, and Ealing, in Middlesex.' For, from being 'as merry and as innocent as our first parents,' they are on a sudden reduced to the depths of an utterable anguish.

The way in which his emotions effected Mr Sterne, if his own account be not exaggerated, was a little serious. Miss Lumley came out to 'D'Estella' to have one last look, and as soon as she had retired and the last farewells were exchanged, he took to his bed, 'worn out by fevers of all kinds.' The confidante, Miss S——, 'from the forebodings of the best of hearts,' was not far away, and seeing him in this miserable condition, wisely insisted on his making an effort, and getting up and coming to her house. Her presence had an odd, even comic, effect on Mr Sterne's feelings. 'What can be the cause, my dear L., that I never have been

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able to see the face of this mutual friend but *I feel myself rent in pieces?*' He was induced to stay with her an hour, during which 'short space' he seems to have grown almost hysterical, for he 'burst into tears a dozen different times,' and was visited 'with affectionate gusts of passion.' In this critical state Miss S—— was presently 'constrained to leave the room and *sympathise in her dressing-room*;' which delicious expression stands for a whole world of sentimental distresses and associations.

She returned, however, shortly, and thus addressed the agitated lover,—'I have been weeping for you both,' said she, in a tone of the sweetest pity, 'for poor L.'s heart I have long known it,' and proceeds to administer other shapes of consolation. Comforted, yet not cured, Mr Sterne could only 'answer her with a kind look and a heavy sigh,' and then withdrew to the absent Miss Lumley's lodgings, for he had found a sort of dismal relief in promptly hiring them on her departure. The maid 'Fanny,' however, was in the secret of his state, and had prepared a little supper. ('She is all attention to me,' he wrote to his mistress.) But he

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could only 'sit over it with tears. A bitter sauce, my L., but I could eat it with no other.' The memory of 'the quiet and sentimental repasts' rose up before him. The moment she 'began to spread the little table' his heart fainted within him. 'One solitary plate, one knife, one fork, one glass!' said he, in despair. 'I gave a thousand penetrating looks at the chair thou hadst so often graced, then laid down my knife and fork, and took out my handkerchief and clapped it across my face, and wept like a child. I do so this very moment, my L.; for as I take up my pen my poor pulse quickens, my pale face glows, and tears are trickling down upon the paper, as I trace the word L.' Then Mr Sterne brings once more 'Fanny' upon the scene, 'who contrives every day bringing in the name of L.' Then a little artfully relates a number of personal matters that 'Fanny' had remarked in him, or mentioned to him; how 'she told me last night, upon *giving me* some *hartshorn*' (how skilful this stroke!) 'she had observed my illness began on the very day of your departure for S——; that I had never held up my head, *had seldom or scarce*

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ever smiled, had fled from all society; that she verily believed I was broken-hearted, for she had never entered the room, or passed by the door but *she heard me sigh heavily*; that I never ate or slept or took pleasure in anything as before.' Mr Sterne, than whom none knew well how to perform on that difficult instrument, woman's heart, felt that a little satisfied vanity would predominate over sympathy with his sufferings.

The fate of these love letters is a curious one. They were preserved for over twenty years. Mr Sterne kept a regular letter-book, making copies of all his own. Not long before his death, being engrossed with what was to prove his very last *grande passion*, 'ambling it along on his haunches,' he turned back to these old effusions and copied out the more effective passages to send to his new mistress!*

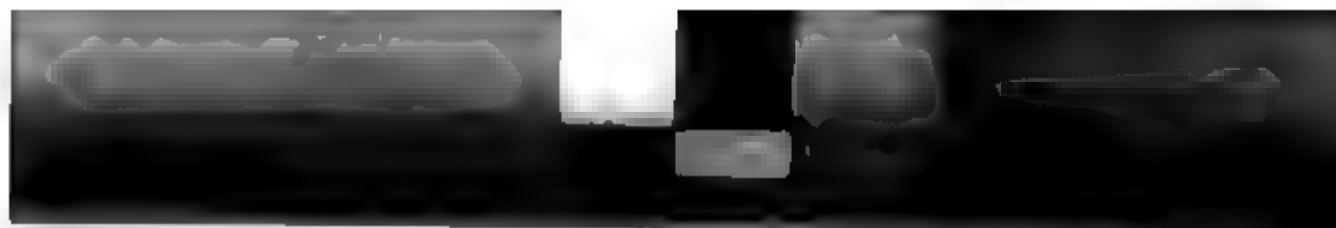
Miss Lumley at last gave way. As we have seen, she fell into a consumption, and sitting with him one evening showed him the will in which she had left him all her fortune, telling him,—'My dear Laury, I can never be yours, for I verily believe I

[* Consult the *Journal to Eliza*.]

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have not long to live,' etc. 'This generosity,' says the lover, naively enough, '*overpowered me.*' We might be inclined to think that up to this time he had been what is called 'shilly-shallying.' Overpowered as he was, he ought never to have forgotten this handsome treatment. After which, the marriage took place accordingly in the cathedral, as we find from the registry.*

* "Mrs Elizabeth Lumley of Little Alice Lane, within the close of the Cathedral on 30th March 1741, Easter Monday—Elizabeth, daughter of Rev. Robert Lumley, Rector of Bedal, County York, by Lydia, widow of T. Kirke, died about 1772.—*Register.*"



AT SUTTON



CHAPTER IV

AT SUTTON

WE next find Mr Sterne and his bride established at his Sutton Vicarage.

It was a pretty spot, with a musically-sounding name, stretching along the banks of the Derwent in an irregular street of nearly a mile long. Elvington, too, was but a pleasant walk away; and—most acceptable charm of all—York, with its good society in mansions and ‘coffee-houses,’ within easy riding distance.

Now was to begin the serious business, as it was to prove in his special case, of working out the grand problem of nuptial life—the solving of those puzzling riddles ‘in the married state,’ of which, as Mr Shandy assured his brother Toby, ‘there are more asses’ loads than all Job’s stock of asses could have carried.’ ‘Nature,’ as he says in another place, ‘which makes everything so well to answer its destination,’ still

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‘eternally bungles it in mating so simple as a married man.’ The pair were certainly ill-matched, but then, where was the wife that would have matched Parson Yorick? He was a mercurial, crazy being, passionately fond of pleasure, quick, brilliant in his ideas, ready with jest and epigram; whereas it is clear that Mrs Sterne was a sober, matter-of-fact ‘body,’ literal in her thoughts, and not at all ‘keeping up’ to her lively husband.

There cannot be the slightest doubt that he drew her in Mrs Shandy,* though, of course, the obstreperous, argumentative Shandy must naturally have suggested such a partner were it only to ‘bring him out.’ ‘She had a way, ‘Mrs Shandy had,’ and that was never to refuse her assent and consent to any proposition my father laid before her, merely because she did not understand it, or had no idea to the principal word or term of art upon which the tenet or proposition rolled. She contented herself with doing all that her godfathers and god-

*[The sketch given here of Mrs Sterne is not in accord with what is now known of her temperament. She was far from being a Mrs Shandy. Consult the Letter of John Croft to Caleb Whitefoord in *Letters and Miscellanies*.]

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mothers promised for her, but no more; and so would go on, using a hard word twenty years together, *and replying to it too*, if it was a verb, in all its moods and tenses, without giving herself any trouble to inquire about it.'

'I wish,' says Mr Shandy, raising his voice, 'the whole science of fortification at the devil, with all its trumpery of saps, mines, blinds, gabions, *fausse-brays*—!'

'*They are foolish things*,' says Mrs Shandy.

'Not that they are, properly speaking, Mrs Wadman's premises,' said Mr Shandy, partly correcting himself, 'because she is but tenant for life.'

'*That makes a great difference*,' says Mrs Shandy, with placid assent.

'In a fool's head,' replied Mr Shandy.

Nothing can be happier than this stroke.

Many years ago the late Lord Houghton described to me a pen-and-ink drawing he had somewhere picked up, an extraordinary caricature of a lady with a masculine face, an enormous chin and hooked nose, a very unpleasant-looking thing. She wears a sort of lace bodice with a broad ribbon round

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her neck and bow behind. The point of the matter is that below are written in Sterne's recognisable hand these words:—'*Mrs Sterne, wife of Sterne.*' In the corners is '*Pigrich Fecit.*' Mr Sterne was fond of sketching, but this effort of his art has a rather ugly significance. The sketch seems to have passed to the Bailiff of Guernsey, who allowed M. Paul Stapfer to have it engraved for his *étude*, '*Laurence Sterne, sa personne, et ses ouvrage.*' Nathaniel Hawthorne mentions that he saw in a shop in Boston—the English Boston—a pair of portraits of Mr and Mrs Sterne, and adds that he thought the lady disagreeable-looking. At the first all went harmoniously enough. The lady had musical tastes, the vicar played on the bass viol and she accompanied him, which prompted him to this absurdity—a comic imitation of tuning the 'cello,—

Ptr—r—r—ing—twing-twang—prut-prut. 'Tis a cursed bad fiddle! Do you know whether my fiddle's in tune or no? Trut—prut. *They should be fifths.* 'Tis wickedly strung—tr—a-e-i-o-u—twang—. The bridge is a mile too high, and the "sound-post" absolutely down, else—trut—prut—. Hark!

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'tis not so bad a tone. Diddle, diddle, diddle, diddle, dum—twaddle-diddle, tweedle-diddle, twiddle-diddle, twoddle-diddle, twuddle-diddle—prut—trut—krish—krash—krush.'

He said long after, as to matrimony, 'My wife is easy, and I should be a beast to rail at it.' By that time, however, the poor lady had found that it was useless to be anything else but 'easy.' He found Sutton a dull place enough.

Long after, when laying his book at Mr Pitt's feet, he tells him that the quarter of England whence it comes is 'a by-corner of the kingdom,' and that the house in which it was written was 'a retired, thatched house.'

When he brought home his bride, he found his parsonage sadly out of repair. The 'retired, thatched house,' in the 'by-corner of the kingdom,' had been handed over to him in no very habitable condition, and much outlay had to be incurred before the pair could settle themselves comfortably. The chimneys were decayed, and the flooring, thatch and plastering needed restoration generally. When the business was done, the vicar went into his vestry, opened his

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registry, and made the following truly Shandean entry:—

‘ A. Dom. 1741.

	£.	s.	d.
‘ Laid out in sushing the house,.....	12	0	0
‘ In stuccoing and bricking the hall,.....	4	6	0
‘ In building the chair-house,.....	5	0	0
‘ In building the par ^r . chimney,.....	3	0	0
‘ Spent in shaping the rooms, plastering, underdrawing, and jobbing, <i>God knows how much!</i> ’			

Another entry runs:—

‘ In May 1745, a dismal storm of hail fell upon this town, and upon some other adjacent ones, which did considerable damage both to the windows and corn. Many of the stones measured *six inches (!)* in circumference. It broke almost all the south and west windows, both of this house and my vicarage at Stillington. L. STERNE.’

Not content with this prodigy, he later sets down among the marriages and births, another marvel:—

‘ Hail fell in the midst of summer *as large as a pigeon’s egg*, which unusual occurrence I thought fit to attest under my own hand. L. STERNE.’

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These must have been Shandean jokes. This parish register was also the receptacle for his horticultural notes.

‘MDM.—That the Cherry Trees and Espalier Apple Hedge were planted in ye gardens, October ye 9th, 1742. Nectarines and Peaches planted the same day. The pails set up two months before.

‘I laid out in ye Garden, in ye year 1742, the sum of £8, 15s. 6d.

L. STERNE.’

And in 1748, we have another entry:—

‘Laid out in enclosing the orchard and in Apple Trees, in ye year 1748, £5. The Apple Trees, Pear and Plumb trees, planted in ye Orchard ye 25th day of October, 1748, by

L. STERNE.’

He took a great interest in farming, and made many experiments himself. He was a good neighbour, as will be seen from the following. A clerical friend had hay to dispose of, and Yorick thus exerted himself:—

‘I have taken proper measures to get

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chapmen for it, by ordering it to be cried at my two parishes; but I find a greater backwardness among my two flocks in this respect than I had imagined.' This was owing 'to a greater prospect of hay and other fodder than there was any expectation of about five weeks ago. It is with the uttermost difficulty, and *a whole morning's waste of my lungs*, that I have got sufficient men to bid up to what you had offered—namely, twelve pounds.' '*I have put them off,*' he says, '*under pretence of writing you word, but in truth to wait a day or two to try the market and see what can be got for it.*' *

It has always been accepted that the sketch of Yorick was intended for himself. During his life, indeed, he was often called Yorick. Yorick's parish was his own, and the little oddities and incidents he describes must assuredly have taken place at Sutton; the Shandean humours—particularly the patent given to the midwife.

* See *Gentleman's Magazine*, vol. 63, pt. 11, p. 507. This letter is not included in the published collection. There are many spurious letters—witness those in the *European Magazine*—so feebly and clumsily done as to ensure detection at a glance. But this 'Hay' letter bears the Sterne 'oacht' unmistakably. [The 'Hay' letter has been reprinted in this edition. It is numbered XX.]

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And well might his sturdy flock be surprised at the lean, lanky, and pale-faced figure, who seemed utterly without 'stamina' in the chest. In that curious face there could scarcely be said to be cheeks, but rather sides to the face with a long, Voltairean mouth, which stunted away at an angle, and a piquant nose.

Yorick was often to be seen riding, and 'had made himself the country-talk by a breach of all decorum; and that was in never appearing better or otherwise mounted than upon a lean, sorry jackass of a horse, value about one pound fifteen shillings, who, to shorten all description of him, was full brother to Rosinante.' Clearly another parish association, which ushers in that droll sketch of the universal request in which was this clerical nag: how at last, being wearied out with midnight expresses from parishioners for the use of his horse to fetch medical aid, and having lost many good steeds from these charitable loans, he was in self-defence driven to the device of keeping some wretched, worn-out hack, not worth the borrowing.

It is wonderful how one of his delicate

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frame and figure could have so long stood the rough blasts and trying climate of Yorkshire. He had miserable health and may be said to have been always fighting off consumption. Something was radically wrong with his chest. At Cambridge he had 'broken a vessel in his lungs,' while the Yorick of the story was subject to 'an asthma' (which he 'caught by skating against the wind'), and to 'a vile cough.' Perhaps, after all, the rude but stimulating breezes and healthful air of Sutton and Coxwold were of service, and gave strength to that weak and ill-put-together frame.

With the 'squire of the parish'—Squire Harland—he was not on good terms; nor is one of his pattern of mind, delighting in sly and concealed humour, likely to be ever acceptable to the rude boisterous 'Westerns' of a country district. Far more suitable is an abundance 'of a mysterious carriage of body to cover the defects of the mind'—Tristram's translation of the French *mot* for gravity—the best clerical garment that can be put on. Among a few select friends, that 'life, and whim, and *gaieté de cœur*' must have made the Parson of Sutton a

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delightful companion; but with the many-headed of the district—the dull, the starched, the unnoticed, the ill-natured—these were dangerous qualities. ‘For with all this’ he ‘carried not one ounce of ballast; he was utterly unpractised in the world, and at the age of twenty-six knew just about as well how to steer his course in it as a romping, unsuspecting girl of thirteen.’ No wonder, then, that the ‘gale of his spirits ran him foul ten times in the day of somebody’s tackling;’ and as ‘the grave and more slow-paced were oftenest in his way’ it may be well conceived how much the mischief was complicated.

He beguiled an hour with writing sometimes poetry, often a sermon or essay. A characteristic specimen of his verse has been carefully preserved at Coxwold. These lines are in the quaint manner of the older devotional poetry, and in some way recall the tone of the ‘Soul’s Errand.’ *

* The Rev. Mr Scott, late the incumbent of Coxwold, kindly favoured me with a copy of these lines. [*The Soul’s Errand* is the second title to *The Lie*, a poem attributed to Sir Walter Raleigh.]

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THE UNKNOWN ☉.

Verses occasioned by hearing a Pass-Bell.

By y^e Rev^d. M^r ST—N.

Hark* my gay Fr^d y^t solemn Toll
Speaks y^e departure of a soul;
'Tis gone, y^t's all we know—not where
Or how y^e unbody'd soul do's fare—
In that mysterious ☉ none knows,
But ☉ alone to w^m it goes;
To whom departed souls return
To take their doom to smile or mourn.

Oh! by w^t glimmering light we view
The unknown ☉ we're hast'ning to!
God has lock'd up y^e mystic Page,
And curtained darkness round y^e stage!
Wise ☿ to render search perplex
Has drawn 'twixt y^e ☉ & y^e next
A dark impenetrable screen
All behind w^{ch} is yet unseen!
We talk of ☿, we talk of Hell,
But w^t yy mean no tongue can tell!
Heaven is the realm where angels are
And Hell the chaos of despair.
But what y^{ess} awful truths imply,
None of us know before we die!
Wheth^r we will or no, we must
Take the succeeding ☉ on trust.

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This hour perhaps o^r Frd is well
Death-struck y^e next he cries, Farewell,
I die! and yet for ought we see,
Ceases at once to breath and be—
Thus launch'd f^m life's ambiguous shore
Ingulph'd in Death appears no more,
Then undirected to repair,
To distant ☉^s we know not where.
Swift flies the 24, perhaps 'tis gone
A thousand leagues beyond the sun;
Or 2^{ce} 10 thousand more 3^{ce} told
Ere the forsaken clay is cold!
And yet who knows if Fr^{nds} we lov'd
Tho' dead may be so far removed;
Only y^e vail of flesh between,
Perhaps yy watch us though unseen.
Whilst we, y^{ir} loss lamenting, say,
They're out of hearing far away;
Guardians to us perhaps they're near
Concealed in vehicles of air—
And yet no notices yy give
Nor tell us where, nor how yy live;
Tho' conscious whilst with us below,
How much y^{ms} desired to know—
As if bound up by solemn Fate
To keep the secret of y^{ir} state,
To tell y^{ir} joys or pains to none,
That man might live by Faith alone.
Well, let my sovereign if he please,
Lock up his marvellous decrees;
Why sh^d I wish him to reveal
W^t he thinks proper to conceal?

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It is enough y^t I believe
Heaven's bright^r yⁿ I can conceive;
And he y^t makes it all his care
To serve God here shall see him there!
But oh! w^t ☉s shall I survey
The moment y^t I leave y^s clay?
How sudden y^e surprise, how new!
Let it, my God, be happy too— *

It will be recollected that Mrs Sterne had a kind friend 'in the south' who had made her a promise that if she ever married a

* When the French critic M. Stapfer was in England some five-and-twenty years ago, a Guernsey friend of his—vice-president of St Elizabeth College in that island—showed him an essay of Sterne's which belonged to a York lady. This was a sort of meditation on the plurality of worlds, no doubt suggested by Fontenelle's essay on the same subject. It is written in a pleasing, natural style, and the topics are set forth in rather parable way. It is addressed to a friend of his, Mr Cook. From the style alone, and the various allusions—to the orchard for instance, which was the scene of his meditation—and the handwriting, there can be no doubt of its authenticity. Sterne's handwriting is unmistakable, and can be recognised at once by anyone familiar with autographs; and this piece was duly compared with specimens of Sterne's handwriting, and was admitted by all to be his. In one of his Sutton entries, it will be remembered, he speaks of his orchard. The essay is of some length, and I am tempted to place some characteristic extracts before the reader:—

'So far I had indulg'd y^e extravagance of my fancy when I bethought myself it was bedtime, and I dare swear you will say it was high time for me to go to sleep.

'I went to bed accordingly. From that time I know not what happen'd to me, till by degrees I found myself in a new state of being, without any remembrance or suspicion that I had ever existed before, growing up gradually to reason and manhood, as I had done here. The world I was in was vast and commodious.

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Yorkshire clergyman, if the living became vacant he would make her a compliment of it. This was Stillington, which lay conveniently near to Sutton.

It was in the gift of Lord Fairfax, of that famous Fairfax family with which Mr Sterne was already connected by ties of marriage. This nobleman had estates in Kent, which would answer to the character of the 'friend of hers in the south.'

In due course the vacancy came, and the

The heavens were enlighten'd with abundance of smaller luminarys resembling stars, and one glaring one resembling the moon; but with this difference that they seem'd fix'd in the heavens, and had no apparent motion. There were also a set of Luminarys (A) of a different nature, that gave a dimmer light. They were of various magnitudes, and appear'd in different forms. Some had y^e form of crescents; others, that shone opposite to y^e great light, appear'd round. We call'd them by a name, w^{ch} in our language w^d sound like second stars. Besides these, there were several luminous (B) streaks running across y^e heavens like our milky way; and many variable glimmerings (C) like our north-lights.

'After having made my escape from the follies of youth, I betook myself to the study of natural philosophy. The philosophy there profess'd was reckon'd the most excellent in y^e world and was said to have receiv'd its utmost perfection. After long and tedious study, I found that it was little else than a heap of unintelligible jargon. All I could make out of it was, that y^e world we liv'd on was flat, immensely extended every way.'

It will be seen that these speculations are very much in the strain that was then fashionable, and is something after the pattern of *Rasselas*.

[This 'essay,' under the title of *A Dream*, is reprinted entire in the second volume of *Letters and Miscellanies*.]

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good friend presented Amanda's husband. In April, 1748, the Rev. Richard Musgrave and the Rev. Richard Levette had died, which caused a vacancy in the prebendal stall of Stillington. Attached to the stall was an incumbency, only a short distance from Sutton, worth forty-seven pounds a year. There was besides a profit rent of a house in York, amounting to the moderate sum of one pound six-and-eightpence. On the 18th of March the formal mandate for his induction was issued. He had thus become a sort of small pluralist, holding three prebends and three rectories.* Nothing could be more convenient. It was but two miles or so away from Sutton; by a little stretch of speech, it might be almost considered in the same parish. It was so happily situated that he could perform service at both places of a Sunday without inconvenience; and Stillington Church, where he preached, was justly admired as an elegant specimen of Gothic. Old Sutton Church still shows the dark oak pews (old-fashioned, closely grained as marble, and black as ebony) where Mr

* On the 3d of March a dispensation had been granted to him to hold these various livings together.

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Sterne's parishioners sat and hearkened to him. And its roof is supported by files of oaken pillars, instead of stone or marble, against which the ancients of Mr Sterne's congregation leaned their heads and dozed tranquilly.

In the year of the Rebellion, 1745, Mr Sterne found himself in his vestry making a couple of entries of much more interest than anything connected with hailstones or espaliers. He wrote:—‘Baptized in 1745. Oct. ye 1st.—Born and baptized Lydia, the daughter of the Reverend Mr Sterne and of Elizabeth his wife, daughter of the Rev. Mr Lumley, late Rector of Bedel.’

He had to make a more distressing one on the next day. ‘Burials, 1745. Oct. 2.—Lydia, daughter of Mr Sterne, Vicar of Sutton.’ This was Lydia the first, another Lydia coming later. The name was that of Mr Sterne's sister.*

Nearly twenty years of this life were to pass by before Mr Sterne became known to the world. This seems but a late flowering and a long interval for a man of genius to

* [Sterne had no sister of this name. But the mother and a sister of Mrs Sterne were named Lydia.]

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devote to such homely duties. But, as it will be seen, our vicar contrived to live in sufficient bustle, hurrying constantly into York, dining and stopping with neighbours. He had many friends, while the intrigues and factions of York furnished him with plenty of excitement.

It will be remembered that he met at Cambridge the loose and clever John Hall Stevenson, the owner of Crazy Castle, and writer of *Crazy Tales*. As he was Sterne's fast friend — companions, perhaps, for the friendships of the dissolute are not very fast — some account of him may be found interesting. About that time Dr Carlyle, the writer of some entertaining memoirs, was at the 'Granby' at Harrogate, where the two gentlemen were who pleased him much — 'hands of the first water,' a friend styled them. This was Mr Hall and Colonel Charles Lee, an American, who were both intimates of Yorick. Hall appeared to be a 'highly-accomplished and well-bred gentleman.' A few days later they all sat up drinking together till six in the morning.

Skelton Castle, known as Crazy Castle, rose from the edge of a dull and solemn

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lake, by a succession of terraces, fortified like bastions, on the topmost platform of which the old castle rambled away, to the right and left, in a succession of low cloisters, propped up with buttresses, breaking out in the centre in a large clump of building. At one end was a tall, square, sturdy tower; on the other rose a thin clock-turret, with a rusted cupola (such as are to be seen in old Belgian country-houses), surmounted by a conspicuous weather-cock. This picturesque but disorderly pile is said to have dated from the fifteenth century.

The turret, with its rusted cupola and weather-cock, was a conspicuous object in the Shandean landscape. It furnished innumerable jokes and allusions to Mr Sterne and his friend.

Mr Hall was born in 1718, and was thus but five years younger than his friend Mr Sterne. It has been seen they were at Cambridge, and belonged to the same college, where Hall was a fellow-commoner. Unfortunately, he fell into the ways of the fashionable professors of vice. The orgies of the 'Twelve Monks of Medmenham' were then attracting not so much reprobation as

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curiosity, and it is believed that this 'ingenious young gentleman' was one of the unholy brotherhood.*

With this godless fraternity has Mr Sterne's name been associated, and certainly without warrant.† At the same time it must be conceded that, by his close fellowship with these merry but abandoned men, he has fairly laid himself open to the charge of partnership in their transgressions. And there is a Latin quotation in *Tristram*, which has perhaps never been noticed, but which shows that, through his friend Hall, he was familiar with one of the secret *passwords*, as it were, of this Medmenham Society.‡ Mr Hall had travelled much, and had taken the necessary degree, by making the Grand Tour many times. But unfortunately for his reputation, the course his reading took, and the society into which his ideas led him, seem to have hopelessly de-

* Such as are curious about the manners and habits of this strange society may consult the *New Foundling Hospital for Wit*, where there is a description of the 'Abbey' by Mr Wilkes; also Johnstone's *Chrysal*, with the key given in Davis's *Olio*.

† See an entertaining Topographical Article in the *Quarterly*—on Berkshire.

‡ See *Tristram Shandy*, vol. v. chap. 36, beginning—'An observation of Aristotle's,' etc.

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praved his tastes, even below the degraded standard then fashionable with men of the world; and, in the year 1762, he so far outraged public decency as to put forth a collection of metrical stories, entitled *Crazy Tales*, which Mr Elwin, the late accomplished editor of the *Quarterly*, has most justly described as 'infamous.' But it is more surprising that, in 1795, an editor should have been found to undertake the pious office of collecting these uncleanly remains, assisted by 'the worthy representative of the author's family, John Wharton, Esquire, of Skelton Castle, Member of Parliament for Beverly,'—who, 'with the utmost liberality and politeness, presented the publisher with corrected copies of the greater part of these works.'

It is well known that it was in the library at Skelton that Sterne made most of his *Pantagruelis* studies. It was well stored with those rare and curious oddities, written after the pattern of Rabelais, which, however, were not rare then, or were not sought for as they are now. Here he primed himself for *Shandy*. I will not say a word for these curios, save that it must be borne

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in mind that the coarseness and grossness of three centuries ago was regarded simply as humour, as a truthful statement, or, as we say, calling a spade a spade. Among the lowest classes there are allusions and statements common enough, but accepted as a matter of historic or literal statement, but which would shock ears polite. On these volumes, such as the rare *Serèes* of Bouchet, Mr Sterne browsed; here he found the *nasal* literature, as it might be, and many a queer, comic story, which he later 'adapted' for *Shandy*.*

Sterne liked Crazy Castle. From many quarters of the Continent his heart, untrav-elled, fondly turned to the old walls. He delighted in the print of it on 'Crazy Tales,' done by Stevenson himself; and far away, at 'Toulouse, looks at it 'ten times a day, with a *quando te aspiciam*.' He honours the man 'who has given the world an idea of our parental seat.' 'Oh,' he breaks out, 'how are you all at Crazy Castle?' He was always scared at the notion of the sacrilegious masons, and pleaded hard and

* Dr Ferrier actually came upon the copy of the *Serèes* which Sterne had used at Skelton.

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comically for the old Shandean mansion. 'But what art thou meditating with axes and hammers? . . . thou lovest the sweet visions of architraves, friezes, and pediments, with their tympanums.'

During the life of Hall Stevenson this intervention was successful. It existed, safe but dilapidated, until the year 1788, when a grandson of Mr Hall, who had become a Wharton, was seized with the fatal pestilence of pulling down and setting up. The unholy work was carried out wholesale, and with a sort of steady frenzy. The magnificent wooded glen which lay, as in a bowl, was flooded, the woods mercilessly cut down, and the strange rococo series of terraces barbarously levelled. The modernisers did their work with fury; not a stone was spared—not even the huge, square Norman tower, almost unique in the kingdom.

Mr Sterne always writes to him in a strain specially affectionate and confidential, and altogether different from what he adopts to others. To him he discloses every thought freely. 'I long to see thy face again!' he writes, again and again. Even Mrs Sterne relished this companionship, and, though

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frowning, could not but enjoy his company. 'She swears you are a fellow of wit, though humorous,—a funny, jolly soul, though somewhat splenetic, and (bating the love of woman) as honest as gold.' If they talked together in the same droll, Cervantic fashion in which they do in their letters, their company must have been entertaining indeed.

He figures in *Shandy* as Eugenius. He was sometimes visited by a sort of hypochondriacal humour, which usually preyed on him when the wind was in the east. When Crazy Castle was full of company, it was no surprise, of some sharp morning, to find their host absent, and suffering a moody imprisonment in his room, so long as the wind was in this obnoxious quarter. His humour was known and accepted without astonishment. Upon the quaint, old-fashioned clock-tower was a weather-cock, which was in full view of Eugenius's room; and when he rose in the morning, his first glance was at the fatal arrow, and its direction regulated the destiny of the day. This was a favourite subject for standing jests between them. To this friend Mr Sterne could be as Shandean, when scribbling, as

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he was to the public when spinning *Tristram*. 'Touched with thee (sensibility),' writes Yorick in his *Sentimental Journey*, 'Eugenius draws my curtain when I languish—hears my tale of symptoms, and blames the weather for the disorder of his nerves.'

Once, when Crazy Castle was full of company, and the Shandean carnival rife, the wind suddenly veered round to this unlucky quarter, and with the usual results. The owner imprisoned himself close in his room, spoke of 'death and the east wind as synonymous,' and by no persuasions could be got to stir from his chamber. But the arch-humorist, his friend Laury, was staying there, and to him a Shandean notion presented itself. He sought out an active urchin of the place, encouraged him overnight, by a sufficient bribe, to scale the weather-cock tower, and tie down the arrow, in a due-west direction, with a strong cord. Early next morning the captive looked forth dismally from his 'square tower,' and joyfully observed the change; hurried down, ordered his horse, and took a smart ride, 'execrating east winds:' Hall Stevenson

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was Hall Stevenson again! But a few days later the cord broke, and he relapsed.*

At a distance this friend seems always solicitous about this dangerous flaw in his character, and is always ready with cheering words and suitable encouragement. 'I rejoice from my heart down to my reins,' he writes from Toulouse, 'that you have snatched so many happy and sunshiny days out of the hands of the blue-devils. If we live to meet and join our forces as heretofore, *we will give these gentry a drubbing*, and turn them for ever out of their usurped citadel. *Some legions* of them have been put to flight already; and I hope to have a hand in dispersing the remainder the first time my dear cousin sets up his banners again under the square tower.'

At his castle, Hall established a society which was called the 'Demoniacs,' one of the usual drinking clubs.

Of the 'Demoniacs' was the Reverend Robert Lascelles, one of the Harewood family—a sort of joker in orders, quite after Mr Sterne's own heart—a Cervantic priest. He was known among the brother-

* This device is also related of the ingenious 'Tom' Sheridan.

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hood under the style and title of '*Panty*,' which was complimentary to his powers of humour, but scarcely to his cloth—'*Panty*' being a familiar contraction from '*Pantagruel*,' one of Rabelais's heroes. He is rarely forgotten in Mr Sterne's letters to the Abbot: 'Greet Panty most lovingly on my behalf.' '*Saluta amicum Panty meum, cujus literis respondebo.*'

Zachary Moore was another of the company, though scarcely so steady a member of the order as some of the rest. 'Who after associating with most of the great personages of these kingdoms,' says a scornful epitaph that was made upon him—'who did him the honour to assist him in the work of getting to the end of a great fortune, was exalted, through their influence, in the forty-seventh year of his age, to an ensigncy, which he actually enjoys at present in Gibraltar.'

There was also belonging to the society a very eccentric character named '*William Hewitt*,' more familiarly known as '*Old Hewitt*,' who died the year before Mr Sterne died. Readers of Smollett's *Peregrine* will recollect a foot-note devoted to

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his praises. He is described as 'a sensible old gentleman, *but* much of a humorist.'

Another of these merry men was one alluded to as 'Don Pringello,' an architect which name is clearly a disguise for Pringle. The person who is alluded to as 'Cardinal S——,' in Mr Sterne's remembrances at the close of his letters, was 'great Scroope,' a well-known Yorkshire name. He sends his love frequently to 'the two Colonels,' one of whom was Colonel Hall, a relation of the host; the other possibly the Colonel Lee whom we saw figuring at Harrogate.

This was not very edifying company for the Vicar of Sutton. It will be recollected that, in the story *Eugenius* is always put forward as giving sound advice to his friend, begging of him to conform more to the ways and humour of those about him. *Eugenius* was always prophesying that his enemies would certainly be too much for him—in which forecast he showed sagacity—outlived his friend many years, and was long known as 'Crazy Hall,' and the *Eugenius* of Sterne. One who saw him in the year 1775, and was struck by the 'odd, thin figure in a dark scratch wig—the more

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remarkable as everybody's hair was then powdered.' The same eccentricity broke out in other members of the family, and in one of the histories of Cleveland there is to be found a very amusing account of an odd lady, whose strange ways were well known through the country.



‘DR SLOP’



CHAPTER V

'DR SLOP'

THE cathedral society at York had naturally attraction for the Vicar of Sutton.

We find in his Shandy what are certainly personal sketches of his brother canons and other officials, who are disguised in Didius, Kysarcious, etc. Among these was a medical practitioner of some practice and celebrity, named Burton. He was born at Colchester, June 9th, 1710, and took his degree at Rheims and Leyden.* He married Mary Hewson, January 2d, 1734.

This personage had many trials in his course, but the most serious of all was that of being exhibited to his contemporaries as Dr Slop.† The people of York were well accustomed to that 'little, squat, uncourtly figure, of about four feet and a half perpen-

* [John Burton was born at Ripon in 1697. He took the degree of M.B. at Cambridge and that of M.D. at Rheims.]

† Dr Belcomb assured Dr Ferrier that the luckless physician always bore this nick-name.

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dicular height, with a breadth of back and a sesquipedality of belly which might have done honour to a sergeant in the Horse Guards, waddling through the dirt upon the vertebræ of a little diminutive pony.' He was often seen on the Yorkshire bridle-roads, strangely mounted, hurrying away to assist the ladies of 'Tom O'Stiles,' or 'John Noakes,' in their illnesses; familiar, too, in the City of York, in other directions besides his profession—and odious as a fly in the political ointment to the high apostles of loyalty who ruled the city.*

Romney was at this time a pupil of Steele, an indifferent portrait-painter, who was then travelling from town to town as 'an itinerant dauber.' He came to York about the year 1754 or 1755,† and his studio was often visited by the Vicar of Sutton. But Mr Sterne took more notice of the work of the pupil than of the master, and, with a discrimination which did credit to his judgment, praised and encouraged the youth who showed such promise. Such

* Dr Belcomb also assured Dr Ferrier that this tradition was long kept alive in York.

†[Exactly 1756–57.]

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patronage, we are told, helped on Romney (who had just then made an imprudent marriage), but excited the jealousy of the master, ‘Count Steele,’ as he was called; for there were numbers ‘who echoed Mr Sterne’s opinions.’

This promising youth must have known by appearance the strange doctor, who was then one of the public characters of the place; and long after, when he came to paint many subjects from *Tristram Shandy*, he could scarcely have shut out the memory of the *accoucheur*’s peculiar figure. There are therefore fair grounds for assuming that his picture of Dr Slop is in some respects a likeness.* He is there represented as something actually deformed, with a gross head and face disproportioned to his shapeless body—a really comic figure, and yet with something odious and venomous.

The *accoucheur*, however, was an antiquarian of much learning and research—witness his great tome of the Yorkshire ‘Monasteries.’ He was both F.R.S. and F.S.A. With much industry he had collected a vast mass of papers on Yorkshire antiqui-

* See *Life of Romney*.

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ties, which near the close of his life he disposed of to receive an annuity for his wife. He made excavations, opening mounds—‘Dane’s Hills,’ at Skepwith and other places. He had studied medicine abroad under Boerhaave. At one time he ‘broke’ for the large sum of £5000. He had unluckily written that ‘five-shillings book’ in midwifery, garnished with appalling plates, in one of which was depicted the author’s own invention of a forceps—‘the author’s New Extractor’ as he described it, which was furnished with claws, a ‘steel slider’ and jagged teeth. We know the ridicule with which both book and forceps were treated in *Shandy*. It was a work really in advance of its time, being stored with practical cases and examples, without the useless speculation which disfigures most medical treatises of the day. Long after his death, it received a posthumous tribute in the shape of a French translation, and in its new shape the famous plates were introduced to the French ‘*chirurgien-accoucheurs*.’

The ‘five-shillings book’ was entitled, *An Essay Towards a Complete New System,*

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and is ushered in by complimentary letters from various learned societies. Even in this inappropriate domain he contrives to bring in a sort of political protest. ‘This approbation,’ he writes in his preface, ‘of different societies is no less a satisfaction than an honour done me, as it will certainly be a means of depriving those *who abound with ill-nature, envy and detraction* of their greatest pleasure.’

There was a Scotch Dr Smellie, distinguished also in Dr Burton’s branch of the profession, who had attained notoriety by the invention of a ‘wooden’ forceps, and various ingenious bits of mechanism, representing the human figure, on which he used to lecture to his students. Dr Burton, in addition to his other quarrels, became embroiled with this professor, whom Mr Shandy clearly alludes to under the name of ‘Adrianus Smelvogt,’ and who had introduced to the public a petrified child, which he called ‘Lithopædus Senonensis.’ Dr Smellie, however, fell into the mistake of taking the description, ‘Lithopædus Senonensis,’ for the proper name and country of some learned medical pundit, and actually quotes him in

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his list of authorities. Mr Sterne has given the mistake immortality in a note:—‘Mr Tristram Shandy has been led into this error, either from seeing Lithopædus’s name of late in a catalogue of learned writers *in Dr —*,’ or by mistaking Lithopædus for Trinecavellius, from the too great similitude of the names.’

He also wrote a work on the ‘Non-naturals,’ a topic which was a favourite with Mr Shandy.

Dr Slop, as we know, is represented as a Catholic, and as a very disagreeable specimen of that faith. It is not quite clear, however, what his creed was. In this dedication to Archbishop Herring, he certainly speaks of ‘your warm attachment to our laws and religion,’ and ‘of the days of ignorance, superstition and slavery.’ And in a letter to Dr Ducavel, he writes of the Archbishop of Canterbury as being ‘so deservedly at the head of our Church.’ He was at least considered a Jacobite and a favourer of the proscribed religion.

He incurred the enmity of Dr Sterne, who persecuted him relentlessly. This arose from his opposing the Archdeacon on the

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great ‘infirmity question.’ During the crisis of 1745, a subscription was set on foot for defence purposes, to which Mr Sterne gave £10—a large sum for a poor vicar—and his uncle £50. News had come that the Highlanders were on their road to York, and there was much alarm. Dr Burton asked leave to go out and secure some moneys of his, a proceeding that excited suspicion. Dr Sterne had him brought before the Recorder, where he ‘made a blustering, often in such a hurry with hasty fury, that he could not utter his words; he perfectly foamed at the mouth, especially when I laughed and told him that I set him and his party at defiance.’ He was, however, committed to York Castle, under a warrant signed ‘J. Place and L. Sterne.’ *

The latter then drew up a newspaper paragraph, which he had inserted in *Lloyd’s Evening Post*, announcing that there was the greatest satisfaction at the arrest, which, however, was not the case, as the physican was very popular. Any violent and irregular proceedings followed on the part of Dr Sterne, who signed many warrants against

* Burton’s narrative—*Liberty Endangered*.

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... was later stated that he had ... witnesses. The luckless doctor ... London, kept in prison for ... last discharged, much suffering ... and pocket. Lord Carteret ... letter of reprimand to the clerk ... of his excess of zeal, and the court refused to grant him their freedom. ... the doctor got into another squabble with Mr Thomson, at a city feast, when he refused to drink some extra-loyal toast. This led to a pamphlet in which he was charged with 'popish' tendencies. We hear of him at a ball at the Assembly Rooms, where he fell and sprained his foot. He died in 1772, having survived his enemy, the author of *Shandy*, some few years.

It seems extraordinary that Sterne should have drawn him with so much personality. Living, as he was, in the same city, or close to it, his situation would have been awkward and almost unendurable. Such gross ridicule seems all but incredible, and could only have been prompted by a sense of security, for the poor doctor had so many enemies to deal with that he would have thought his caricatures the most harmless.

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We might speculate, was he the author of the paragraph sent by his uncle's direction to London? This is likely enough.

Meanwhile our Vicar was now pursuing his course, enlivening the dull round of parish work with social engagements. A jest of his at this time, uttered at one of the York coffee-houses, has been preserved. A young fellow had been flippantly inveighing against the clergy, dwelling on their hypocrises, and turning to Mr Sterne, asked if he did not agree with him. In reply, Mr Sterne began to describe a favourite pointer of his own, but which had the trick of flying at every clergyman he met. The other in necessity asked him how long he had the trick. ‘Ever since he was a puppy,’ was the reply. This was not specially brilliant, but was smart and was repeated.

The loss of the first Lydia was now supplied by the birth of a daughter, which we find entered in the Sutton register:—‘Baptised 1747. December 1st.—Born and baptised Lydia, daughter of the Rev. Mr Sterne and Elizabeth his wife.’ This was Lydia the second—both parents having a *penchant* for

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the name—who was to prove as mercurial and wayward as her father.

He was now gaining reputation as a sort of ‘star preacher,’ and was invited to preach at York on ‘showy’ occasions. Two of these deliverances deserve notice. One was a charity sermon for the Bluecoat Schools of York.

Good Friday, in the year 1747, was the rather strange day selected; and the sermon itself was the first work of Mr Sterne’s that appeared in print. It is also curious as being the token of his affection he selected to send to one of the earlier objects whom he distinguished with his attentions. The subject was — ‘The Case of Elijah and the Widow of Zarephath considered: A Charity Sermon, preached on Good Friday, April 17, 1747, in the Parish Church of St Michael-le-Belfrey, before the Right Honourable the Lord Mayor, Aldermen and Sheriffs, at the Annual Collection for the Support of Two Charity Schools.’ The text was the miracle of the barrel of meal ‘that wasted not,’ and the cruise of oil that did not ‘fail.’ The Shandean handling, as applied to sermons, was to appear some years

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later in the ‘Assize Sermon.’ Reasoning on the natural expectance of the widow, that the prophet would recompense her son, he says naively,—‘Many a parent would build high upon a worse foundation!’ When the prophet began to pray over the dead child, that it might be restored to life, he says quaintly,—‘*He was, moreover, involved in the success of his prayer himself*’—passages which have quite the old divinity flavour. Then describing the scene where the child is restored to life, his taste for painting breaks out, and he pictures for his congregation the various figures of ‘the piece.’ ‘It is a subject one might recommend to the pencil of the greatest genius, and would even afford matter for description here.’ He hints presently at a very good inducement to Christian charity—viz., that ‘So quickly sometimes has the wheel of Fortune turned round, that many a man has lived to enjoy the benefit of that charity which his own piety projected.’ He then entertains his audience with ‘an anecdote of Alexander, the Tyrant of Pheres,’ which ‘antiquity has preserved;’ and, drawing the picture of the churlish, uncharitable man, brings on ‘the

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Great Master of Nature,' and the quotation, not so well worn then as now,—

The man that hath not music in his soul,' etc.,

—declaiming it as he had no doubt heard it declaimed upon the York boards.

But far more important was the 'Assize Sermon,' delivered before the Judges. He was chaplain to the High Sheriff—'Sir W. Pennyman, Bart.'—so that it was probably an official duty.

Seven or eight years later, when he was getting his *Tristram* puppets in order, he found his *brochure*, and the happy notion occurred to him of preaching it once more, not to assize judges and lawyers, but to a more humorous congregation, consisting of Dr Slop, Mr Shandy, and my Uncle Toby. The notes and interruptions being thus ingeniously fitted to the sermon (which was written long before), and the sermon itself not being originally intended for such adornments, show how very dramatic in their character were those serious compositions, and how they held in themselves, at a moment's notice, as it were, all the elements of Shandean comedy. 'Can the reader be-

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lieve,’ says Yorick, with a pardonable effrontery, that ‘this sermon of Yorick’s was preached at an Assize, in the Cathedral, before *a thousand witnesses*, ready to give oath of it, by a certain Prebendary of that church?’ An evidence of the respectable size of the congregation.

To this second appearance we owe many delightful strokes of satire. How excellent the touch with which it opens, in reference to that questionable tone with which some divines introduce their text. ‘For we trust we have a good conscience.’—Hebrews xiii. 18. ‘Trust? trust we have a good conscience!’ On which ‘quoth my father,’ very happily, ‘you give that sentence a very improper accent, for *you curl up your nose*, man, and read it with such a sneering tone, *as if the parson was going to abuse the Apostle.*’





CATHEDRAL QUARRELS

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CHAPTER VI

CATHEDRAL QUARRELS

DURING the course of his long residence at York and at his parish, his relations with his redoubtable uncle were of an uncertain, unsatisfactory kind, until at last a fierce quarrel broke out. The nephew, as we have seen, was under serious obligations to him, and owed his fortunate start in life to his patronage. The cause of the quarrel, it will be recollected, was that he would not write party paragraphs in the papers. 'Though he was a party man, I was not. I detested such dirty work.'

All the same, however, he would seem to have done a good deal of work in this way for his uncle, for in one of his letters he gives as a reason for writing *Tristram*, that he was tired of employing his brains for other people's advantage. ''Tis a foolish sacrifice I have made for some years to an

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ungrateful person.' This is likely enough the true reason for the breach.* The ungrateful person had refused some guerdon and his dependant had struck work.

Further, Sterne himself was exactly not correct in boasting himself no party man, for he took part in the cathedral dissensions, wrote pamphlets on his own account, etc. But it will be seen that there was a family quarrel raging between uncle and nephew.

This hearty dislike of Dr Sterne's was also inflamed by their somewhat constrained association in the cathedral work. The uncle, however, exhibited his animosity without the least regard to propriety. He, in fact, persecuted the unfortunate Laurence, and tried to injure him in many ways. In one instance, he exhibited a spite and malevolence that seems incredible, and the incident is worth describing as a specimen of the little quarrels and intrigues of the cathedral circle.

It was customary, when one of the canons or prebendaries was prevented taking his turn

* [For coffee-house gossip on the breach, see the Letter of John Croft to Caleb Whitefoord in *Letters and Miscellanies*.]

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of preaching, to allow him to engage a substitute, which put a few pounds in the pocket of some of his poorer brethren. The Rev. Laurence, having already shown talent in this line, was occasionally applied to. It is unconceivable that his uncle should have interposed to prevent his benefiting by this meagre aid. In a letter* of bitter complaint addressed to Archdeacon Blackburn, author of a book that made some noise, *The Confessional*, all the curious phases of the incident are set out in a very natural, unaffected way:—

SUTTON, Nov. 3, 1750.

‘DEAR SIR,—Being last Thursday at York to preach the Dean’s turn, Hilyard the Bookseller who had spoke to me last week about Preaching y^{rs}, in case you should not come y^rself told me, He had just got a Letter from you directing him to get it supplied—But with an intimation, that if I undertook it, that it might not disoblige your Friend the Precentor. If my Doing it for you in any way could possibly have endangered that, my Regard to you on all accounts is such,

* [For the complete text, see Letter V. in *Letters and Miscellanies*.]

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that you may depend upon it, no consideration whatever would have made me offer my service, nor would I upon any Invitation have accepted it, Had you incautiously press'd it upon me; And therefore that my undertaking it at all, upon Hilyards telling me he should want a Preacher, was from a knowledge, that as it could not in Reason, so it would not in Fact, give the least Handle to what you apprehended. I would not say this from bare conjecture, but known Instances, having preached for so many of Dr Sternes most Intimate Friends since our Quarrel without their feeling the least marks or most Distant Intimation, that he took it unkindly. In which you will the readier believe me, from the following convincing Proof, that I have preached the 29th of May, the Precentor's own turn, for these two last years together (not at his request, for we are not upon such terms) But at the Request of Mr Berdmore whom he desired to get them taken care of, which he did, By applying Directly to me without the least Apprehension or scruple—And If my preaching it the first year had been taken amiss, I am morally certain that Mr Berd-

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more who is of a gentle and pacific Temper would not have ventured to have ask'd me to preach it for him the 2^d time, which I did without any Reserve this last summer. The Contest between us, no Doubt, has been sharp, But has not been made more so, by bringing our mutual Friends into it, who, in all things, (except Inviting us to the same Dinner) have generally bore themselves towards us, as if this Misfortune had never happened, and this, as on my side, so I am willing to suppose on his, without any alteration of our opinions of them, unless to their Honor and Advantage. I thought it my Duty to let you know, How this matter stood, to free you of any unnecessary Pain, which my preaching for you might occasion upon this score, since upon all others, I flatter myself you would be pleased, as in gen^l, it is not only more for the credit of the church, but of the Prebend^y himself who is absent, to have his Place supplied by a Preb^y of the church when he can be had, rather than by Another, tho' of equal merit.

'I told you above, that I had had a conference with Hilyard upon this subject, and

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indeed should have said to him, most of what I have said to you. But that the Insufferableness of his behaviour (*sic*) put it out of my Power. The Dialogue between us had something singular in it, and I think I cannot better make you amends for this irksome Letter, than by giving you a particular Acc^t of it and the manner I found myself obliged to treat him wh^{ch} by the by, I should have done with still more Roughness But that he sheltered himself under the character of y^r Plenipo: How far His Excellency exceeded his Instructions you will percieve (*sic*) I know, from the acc^t I have given of the hint in your Letter, w^{ch} was all the Foundation for what pass'd. I step'd into his shop, just after sermon on *All Saints*, when with an air of much gravity and importance, he beckond me to follow him into an inner Room; no sooner had he shut the Door (*sic*) but, with the awful solemnity of a Premier who held a Letter de Cachêt upon whose contents my Life or Liberty depended—after a minuits Pause, — He thus opens his Commission. Sir—My Friend the A. Deacon of Cleveland not caring to preach his turn, as I

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conjectured, has left me to provide a Preacher,—But before I can take any steps in it with regard to you—I want first to know, Sir, upon what footing you and Dr Sterne are?—Upon what footing!—Yes, Sir, how your Quarrel stands?—Whats that to you?—How our Quarrel stands! Whats that to you, you Puppy? But, Sir, Mr Blackburn would know—What's that to him?—But, Sir, dont be angry, I only want to know of you, whether Dr Sterne will not be displeased in case you should preach—Go look; I've just now been preaching and you could not have fitter opportunity to be satisfied.—I hope, Mr Sterne, you are not angry. Yes, I am; But much more astonished at your *Impudence*. I know not whether the Chancellors stepping in at this instant and flapping to the Dore, did not save his tender soul the Pain of the last word.

‘However that be, he retreats upon this unexpected Rebuff, takes the Chancell^r aside, asks his Advice, comes back submissive, begs Quarter, tells me Dr Hering had quite satisfied him as to the grounds of his scruple (tho' not of his Folly) and therefore be-

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seeches me to let the matter pass, and to preach the turn. When I—as Percy complains in Harry y^e 4—

. . . All smarting with my wounds
To be thus pesterd by a Popinjay,
Out of my Grief and my Impatience
Answerd neglectingly, I know not what
. for he made me mad
To see him shine so bright & smell so sweet
& talk so like a waiting Gentlewoman

——Bid him be gone & seek Another fitter for his turn. But as I was too angry to have the perfect Faculty of recollecting Poetry, however pat to my case, so I was forced to tell him in plain Prose tho' somewhat elevated —That I would not preach, & that he might get a Parson where he could find one.

‘It is time to beg pardon of you for troubling you with so long a letter upon so little a subject—which as it has proceeded from the motive I have told you, of ridding you of uneasiness, together with a mixture of Ambition not to lose either the Good Opinion, or the outward marks of it, from any man of worth and character, till I have done something to forfeit them. I know your Justice will excuse.

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‘ I am, Rev^d Sir, with true Esteem and
Regard of w^{ch} I beg you’l consider this
letter as a Testimony,

‘ Y^r faithful & most aff^{te}

‘ Humble Serv^t

‘ LAU: STERNE.

‘ *P.S.*

‘ Our Dean arrives here on Saturday. My
wife sends her Respt^s to you & y^r Lady.

‘ I have broke open this letter, to tell
you, that as I was going with it to the
Post, I encountered Hilyard, who desired
me in the most pressing manner, not to let
this affair transpire—& that you might by
no means be made acquainted with it—I
therefore beg, you will never let him feel
the effects of it, or even let him know you
know ought about it—for I half promised
him,—tho’ as the letter was wrote, I could
but send it for your own use—so beg it
may not hurt him by any ill Impression,
as he has convinced it proceeded only from
lack of Judgm^t.

‘ To

‘ The Reverend Mr Blackburn,

‘ Arch-Deacon of Cleveland,

‘ at Richmond.’

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There is an impetuosity and controversial vehemence in all this, which shows that our divine was at this time much more of 'a party man' than he was inclined to admit. In the later and more notable portion of his career he was much more gentle, and his contact with an admiring world seems to have softened his nature. The correspondence, however, reveals a regular picture of the life in a cathedral town; for we are shown a bookseller arranging the 'turns' of the preacher, and actively trafficking in them according to favour or prejudice. The result, however, proved that the bookseller was justified in putting his questions. He was in terror of Dr Sterne's wrath, as will be seen from the following letter:—

'SUTTON, *Nov.* 12, 1750.

'When I set pen to paper in my last there was much less of spleen at the bottom of my Heart than there was of desire (as I hinted then) to have your good opinion—you tell me I have that, and I assure you there is no Man's I am prouder of:—How much I am sure it will add to what little reputation I have, I will not offend

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you by declaring; I am certain that a Person who could drop so modest a hint of the little importance he was of can be no good judge of the matter, and as it will be impossible to convince him of it, I must rest satisfied with showing him at least what a price I set upon it by my endeavours on all occasions to keep and improve it.

‘As for the future supply of any of your vacant turns you may be assured I should be willing to undertake them whenever you want a proxy, and if you have no friend you would choose to put up, you would even do me a *favor* to let me have them—I say a favor, For, by the by, my Daughter will be Twenty Pounds a better Fortune by the favors I’ve received of this kind from the Dean & Residentiaries this Year, and as so much at least is annually & without much trouble to be picked up in our Pulpit, by any man who cares to make the Sermons. You who are a Father will easily guess & as easily excuse my motive.

‘I was extremely sensible of how much I owed to so friendly a wish, when you told me last summer how glad you would be to promote a Reconciliation, which had the

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rapidity of my conference given me the least leisure to have thought on, I could not have uttered so undeserved and fast a reply as I did (what is that, &c.) which though directly meant as a rebuke to Hilyard, Yet I am even sorry the expression escaped me. It was my anger and not me, so I beg this may go to sleep in peace with the rest which I never had an inclination or even a power to remember, had you not desired it.....' * etc., etc., etc.

His uncle soon found out what was going on, and interposed. For malignity and family animosity his letter can hardly be matched. He wrote:—

‘*Decem.* 6, 1750.

‘GOOD MR ARCHDEACON,—I will beg leave to rely upon your Pardon for taking the Liberty I do with you in relation to your ‘Turns of preaching in the Minster. What occasions it is, Mr Hilyard’s employing the last time *the Only person unacceptable to me in the whole Church, an ungrateful and unworthy nephew of my own*, the

* [The conclusion of this letter the editor is unable to discover.]

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Vicar of Sutton; and I should be much obliged to you, if you would please either to appoint any person yourself, or leave it to your Register to appoint one when you are not here. If any of my turns would suit you better than *your own I would change with you. . . .* * †

This letter is endorsed—

‘Mr Jaques Sterne—representative of his nephew Yorick,’ and mentions of the Popish nunnery at York. †

At this juncture there now reappears upon the scene Sterne’s mother, the widow, with her daughter, to persecute her son, the unhappy Vicar of Sutton. One of the most unfortunate, as well as the most undeserved of the calumnies upon Sterne’s name, was the one that he had been a bad, undutiful son, and had left his mother to starve,

* This later portion is lost, but refers to the well-known convent at Micklegate Bar which Dr Sterne had attacked. These interesting letters are in the Museum. [The letter, of which Mr Fitzgerald thought a part lost, is given entire in this edition of Sterne’s Works. It is numbered VII.]

† The ‘Popish nunnery’ still flourishes and is one of the most important institutes of the city. I may add that an aunt of my own lived and died there. [The letter is not exactly endorsed; but in another hand is written, beneath the date, “Mr Jaques Sterne, reprobation of his nephew Yorick and mention of the Popish nunnery at York.” It will be observed that Mr Fitzgerald misread the so-called endorsement.]

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while he indulged in beautiful sentiment. This gross charge has been always accepted chiefly owing to a thoughtless passage in one of Walpole's conversations with Mr Pinkerton,—‘I know from indubitable authority that his mother, who kept a school, having run in debt, on account of an extravagant daughter, would have rotted in a jail if the parents of her scholars had not raised a subscription for her. Her own son had too much sentiment to have any feeling. A dead ass was more important to him than a living mother.’ Byron put this epigrammatically, and thus helped the circulation of the story, saying that ‘he preferred whining over a dead ass to relieving a living mother.’ And Mr Thackeray, in our time gave renewed vitality to the tale.*

It will be seen that all Mr Walpole learned upon his ‘indubitable authority’ was the simple facts of Mrs Sterne's distress, and the subscription raised for her. It was quite con-

* Thackeray, who was nothing but a novelist, until he chose to turn historian and employed the late Mr Hannay to collect his facts for him, shows equal prejudice and ignorance in dealing with Sterne. He found him a capital subject for the cheap ‘clap-trap’ utterance that would ‘take’ in a public lecture-room, and he was at once scornful and sarcastic on poor Sterne's devices. Yet Thackeray's own writing is often quite open to such a charge.

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sistent with this that her son might have assisted her. If he did not at all, or to the extent that was necessary, it must be considered that he was a poor, a very poor parson, struggling to support his own family. Even the 'deep sentiment' that it so ridiculed with the contrasted sketch of the dead donkey, were actual elements which, after all, would have helped him to make a little money, were he disposed to give relief.

Fortunately, however, we have materials for an almost complete vindication of Mr Sterne, in the shape of a letter* of inordinate length, addressed to his hostile uncle, in which he states his whole case. It shows that he was worried and persecuted past endurance by the importunities of this most unreasonable of parents, for whom he had done everything that was reasonable.

'My motive for offering to send my wife rather than myself, upon this particular business, being first merely to avoid the occasion of any plot which might arise betwixt you and me upon anything foreign to the Errand, which might possibly disappoint the end of

* [This letter, of which only parts with variations from the true copy are given here, is printed entire from the manuscript in *Letters and Miscellanies*. See Letter VIII.]

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it, and secondly as I had reason to think your passions were pre-engaged in this affair, or that the respect you owed my wife as a gentlewoman would be a check against their breaking out; and consequently that you would be more likely to give her a candid hearing which was all I wished, and indeed, all that a plain story to be told without Art or Management could possibly stand in want of. As you had thought proper to concern yourself in my Mother's complaints against me, I took it for granted you could not deny me so plain a piece of Justice, so that when you write me word back by my servant "you desired to be excused from any conference with my wife, but that I might appear before you." As I foresaw such an interview with the sense I had of such a treatment was likely to produce nothing but an angry expostulation (which could do no good, but might do hurt), I begged *in my turn* to be excused, and as you had already refused so unexceptionable an offer of hearing my defence, I supposed in course, you would be silent for ever after upon that head, and therefore I concluded with saying "as I was under no necessity of applying

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to you, and wanted no man's direction or advice in my own private concerns I would make myself as easy as I could with the consciousness of having done my Duty, and of being able to prove I had whenever I thought fit and for the future that I was determined never to give you any further trouble upon the subject." In this resolution I have kept for three years and should have continued so to the end of my life, laying open the nakedness of my circumstances, which for aught I knew was likely to make me suffer more in the opinion of one half of the world than I could possibly gain from the other part of it by the clearest defence that could be made.

'Under the distress of this vexatious alternative I went directly to my old friend and College acquaintance, our worthy Dean, and laid open the hardship of my situation, begging his advice what I should best do to extricate myself. His opinion was that there was nothing better than to have a meeting face to face with you, and my Mother, and with his usual friendship and humanity he undertook to use his best offices to procure it for me.

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‘Accordingly about 8 months ago he took an opportunity of making you this request, which he told me you desired only to defer till the hurry of your Nunnery cause was over.

‘Since the determination of that office, he has put you in mind of what you gave me hopes of, but without success; you having (as he tells me) absolutely refused now to hear one word of what I have to say. The denying me this piece of common right is the hardest measure that a man in my situation could receive, although the whole inconvenience of it may be thought to fall as intended, directly upon me, yet I wish Dr Sterne a great part of it may not rebound upon yourself. For why, may any one ask, why will you interest yourself in a complaint against your Nephew if you are determined against hearing what he has to say for himself?—and if you thus deny him every opportunity he seeks of doing himself justice. Is it not too plain you do not wish to find him justified, or that you do not care to lose the uses of such a handle against him? However it may seem to others, the case appearing in this light to me it has determined me con-

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trary to my former promise “of giving you no further trouble”—to add this, which is not to solicit again what you have denied me to the Dean; (for after what I have felt from so hard a treatment, I would not accept of it, should the offer now come from yourself.) But my intent is by a plain and honest narrative of my Behaviour, and my Mother too to disown you for the future: being determined since you would not hear me, face to face with my accusers, that you shall not go unconvinced, or at least not uninformed of the true state of the case.

‘It is not necessary for my Defence to go so far back as the loss of my Father, y^r brother, whose death left me at the age of 16 without one shilling in the world, and I may add *at that time*, without one friend in it except my cousin Sterne of Elvington, who became a father to me and to whose protection *then* I chiefly owe what I now am; for as you absolutely refused giving me any aid at my father’s death, you are sensible. I should have been driven out naked into the world, young as I was, to have shifted for myself as well as I could.

‘It is not necessary, I say, for my defence

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to go so far back, nor do I recall it to your memory by way of recrimination for any seeming cruelty of yours towards me then (for the favours I received after gave me reason to forget it), and besides, I think you were the best judge of what you had to do in such a case, and were only accountable to God and your own conscience. But I previously touch upon this particuler for the sake of a single reflection which I shall make and turn to my account bye and bye.

‘From my father’s death to the time I settled in the world, which was eleven years, my mother lived in Ireland, and as during all that time I was not in a condition to furnish *her with* money, I seldom heard from her, and when I did the account I severally had was, that by the help of an embroidery school that she kept, and by the punctual payment of her pension, which is £20 a year, she lived well, and would have done so to this hour had not the news that I had married a woman of fortune hastened her over to England. She has told you, it seems, “that she left Ireland then upon my express invitation.” This, it seems, was not the case. Her son “rep-

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resented to her the inhumanity of a mother *able* to maintain herself, thus forcing herself as a burden upon a son who was scarce able to support himself without breaking in upon the future support of another person whom she might imagine was much dearer to me." In short, I summed up all those arguments with making her a present of twenty guineas, which with a present of cloathes, etc., which I had given her the day before.

' In the year 44 my sister was sent from Chester, by order of my mother to York, that she might make her complaint to you, and engage you to second them in these unreasonable claims upon us.

' This was the intent of her coming, though the pretence of her journey (*of which I bore the expenses*) was to *make* a month's visit to me, or rather a month's experiment of my further weakness. She stayed her time or longer, was received by us with all kindness, was sent back at my own charge with my own servant and horses, with five guineas which I gave her in her pocket, and a six and thirty piece which my wife put into her hand as she took horse.

' My wife and self took no small pains, the

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time she was with us, to turn her thoughts to some way of depending upon her own industry, in which we offered her all imaginable assistance, first by proposing to her that, if she would set herself to learn the business of a mantua maker, as soon as she could get insight enough into it to make a gown and set up for herself, *that* we would give her £30 to begin the world and support her till business fell in, or, if she would go into a milliner's shop in London, my wife engaged not only to get her into a shop where she should have £10 a year wages, but to equip her with cloathes, etc., properly for the place; or lastly, if she liked it better, as my wife had then an opportunity of recommending her to the family of one of the first of our nobility, she undertook to get her a creditable place in it where she would receive no less than £8 or £10 a year wages, with other advantages. My sister showed no seeming opposition to either of the two last proposals till my wife had wrote and got a favourable answer to the one and an immediate offer of the other.

‘It will astonish you, sir, when I tell you

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she rejected them with the utmost scorn, telling me I might send my own children to service when I had any, but for her part, as she was the daughter of a gentleman, *she would not disgrace* herself, but would live as such. Notwithstanding so absurd an instance of her folly, which might have disengaged me from any further concern, yet I persisted in doing what I thought was right, and though after this the tokens of our kindness were neither so great nor so frequent as before, yet nevertheless we continued sending what we could conveniently spare.

‘It is not usual to take receipts for presents made, so that I have not many vouchers of that kind, and my mother has more than once denied the money I have sent her, even to my own face, I have little expectation of such acknowledgements as she ought to make. But this I solemnly declare, upon the nearest computation we can make, that in money, cloaths, and other presents, we are more than £90 poorer for what we have given and remitted to them. In one of the remittances (which was the summer my sister’s visit), and which, as I

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remember, was a small bill drawn for £3 by Mr Ricord upon Mr Baldeso, after my mother had got the money in Chester for the bill she peremptorily denied the receipt of it. I naturally supposed some mistake of Mr Ricord in directing. However, that she might not be a sufferer by the disappointment, I immediately sent another bill for as much more, but withal said, as Mr Ricord could prove his sending her the bill, I was determined to trace out *who* had got my money, upon which she wrote word back that she had received it herself but had *forgot it*. You will the more readily believe this when I inform you, that in December 47, when my mother went to your house to complain she could not get a *farthing* from me, that she carried with her *ten guineas* in her pocket which I had given her but two days before. If she could *forget* such a sum, I had reason to *remember* it, for when I gave it I did not leave myself one guniea in the house to befriend my wife, though then within one day of her labour, and under an apparent necessity of a man midwife to attend her.

‘What *uses* she made of this ungenerous

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concealment I refer again to yourself. But I suppose they were the same as in my sister's case, to make a penny of us both.

‘ When I gave her this sum I desired she would go and acquaint you with it, and moreover took that occasion to tell her I would give her £8 every year whilst I lived. The week after she wrote me word she had been with you, and was determined not to accept that offer unless I would settle the £8 upon her.

‘ ’Tis an absolute falsehood, and even so far from probability, that the character which both you and Mrs Custobadie had given me and my wife of her clamorous and rapacious temper, made us live in perpetual dread of her thrusting herself upon us.

‘ I do remember, sir, when I married I acquainted you that Mrs Sterne refused to have her own fortune settled upon her, and wished for no better security than my honour; to which you *then* answered, “ *I was the more bound to take care that the Lady should be no sufferer by such a mode of her confidence.*” She never shall through my fault; though she has through my misfor-

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tune and that long train of difficulties and drawbacks with which you know I began the world, as, namely, the whole debt of my school education, cloathing, etc., for nine years together, which came upon me the moment I was able to pay it. To this a great part of the expense of my education at the University, *too scantily defrayed by my Cousin Sterne*, with only £30 a year, and the last out of my Wife's fortune and chargeable upon it in case my wife should be left a widow. This she added was *your* particular advice, which without better evidence I am not yet willing to believe; because though you do not yet know the particulars of my Wife's fortune—you must know so much of it, was such an event as my death to happen shortly, without such a burden as this upon my widow and my child, *that Mrs Sterne would be as much distressed and as undeservedly so as any widow in G^t. Britain*; and though I know as well as you and my Mother that I have a *power in law* to lay her open to all the terrors of such a melancholy situation—that I feel I have *no power* in equity or in conscience to do so; and I will add in her

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behalf, — considering how much she has merited at my hands as the best of wives, that was I capable of being worried into so cruel measure as to give away hers and her child's bread upon the clamour which you and my Mother have raised—that I should not only be the weakest but the *worst man* that ever woman trusted with all she had.

‘ In what light she represented so much affection and generosity I refer to your memory of the account she gave you in her return through York, But for very strong reasons I believe she concealed from you all that was necessary to make a proper handle of us both, which double game by the bye, my mother has played over again upon us, for the same purposes since she come to York, of which you will see a proof bye and bye.

‘ The very hour I received notice of her landing at Liverpool, I took post to prevent her coming nearer me, stayed three days with her, used all the arguments I could fairly to engage her to return to Ireland and end her days with her own relations, which I doubted not would have the effect I wanted. But I was much mis-

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taken, for though she heard me with attention, yet as soon as she had got the money into her pocket, she told me with an air of the utmost insolence “That as for going back to live in Ireland, she was determined to show me no such sport; that she had found I had married a wife who had brought me a fortune, and she was resolved to enjoy her share of it, and live the rest of her days at her ease, either at York or Chester.”

‘I need not swell this letter with all I said upon the unreasonableness of such a determination, it is sufficient to inform you that all I did say proving to no purpose I was forced to leave her in her resolution, and notwithstanding so much provocation, I took my leave with assuring her “That though my Income was strait I should not forget I was a son, though she had forgot she was a *mother*.”’

‘From Liverpool, as she had determined, she went with my sister to fix at Chester, where though she had little just grounds for such an expectation, she found me better than my word, for we were kind to her above our power, and common justice to

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ourselves, and though it went hard enough down with us to reflect that we were supporting both her and my sister in the pleasures and advantages of a town life, which for prudent reasons we denied ourselves, yet still we were weak enough to do it for 5 years together, though not without continual remonstrances on my side as well as perpetual clamours on theirs, which you will naturally imagine to have been the case, when all that was given was thought as much above reason by the one, as it fell *below* the expectations of the other.

‘I convinced her that besides the interest of my wife’s fortune, I had then but a bare hundred pounds a year; out of which my ill health obliged me to keep a curate; that we had moreover ourselves to keep, and in that sort of decency which left it not in our power to give her much; that what we could spare she should as certainly receive in Ireland as here; that the place she had left was a cheap country—her native one, and where she was sensible £20 a year was more than equal to 30 here, besides the discount of having her pension paid in England

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where it was not due, and the utter impossibility I was under of making up so many deficiencies.

‘The false modesty of not being able to declare this, has made me thus long to pay and my Mother, and to this clamour raised against me; and since I have made known thus much of my condition as an honest man, it becomes me to add *that, I think I have no right* to apply one shilling of my Income to any other purpose but that of laying by a provision for my wife and child: and that it will be time enough (if then) to add somewhat to my Mothers pension of £20 a year when I have as much to leave my Wife, who besides the duties I owe her of a Husband and the father of a dear child, has this further claim;—that she, whose bread I am thus defending was the person who brought it into the family, and whose birth and education would ill enable her to struggle in the world without it—that the other person who now claims it from her, and has raised us so much sorrow upon that score, brought not one sixpence into the family,—and though it would give me pain enough to report it upon any other occasion, that

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she was the daughter of no other than a poor Suttler who followed the Camp in Flanders—was neither born nor bred to the expectation of a 4th part of what the government allows her, and therefore has reason to be contented with such a provision though double the sum would be nakedness to my wife.

‘I suppose this representation will be a sufficient answer to any one who expects no more from a man, than what the difficulties under which he acts will enable him to perform for those who expect more. I leave them to their expectations and conclude this long and hasty wrote letter, with declaring that the relation in which I stand to you inclines me to exclude you from the number of the last. For notwithstanding the hardest measure that ever man received continued on your side without any provocation on mine, without ever once being told my fault, or conscious of ever committing one which deserved an unkind look from you, notwithstanding this and the bitterness of 10 years unwearied persecution, that I retain that sense of the service you did me at my first setting out in the world,

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which becomes a man inclined to be grateful, and that, I am, Sir,

‘Your once much obliged though now

‘Your much injured nephew,

‘LAURENCE STERNE.

‘SUTTON ON THE FOREST,

‘*April 5, 1751.*’ *

It is clear from this that Dr Sterne had taken up the widow’s case, not so much from sympathy as with a view of harassing and blackening his nephew. He had also, as the latter says, estranged this daughter by his ‘wickedness, and her own folly.’

* ‘Copied by permission of Mr Rob. Cole of Upper Norton Street from a copy carefully made by some person for Mr Godfrey Bosvile formerly of Gurthwaite, and bought by Mr Cole with many other papers of Mr Bosvile, July 25, 1851. A copy of a letter wrote by Laurence Sterne, author of *Tristram Shandy*, to his uncle, Dr Sterne, April 5, 1751. [The copy of this letter is now in the British Museum. Mr Fitzgerald clearly misread the proper names. See Letter VII in *Letters and Miscellanies*.]

A SERIES OF LETTERS



CHAPTER VII

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AMONG the canons of York was a Mr John Blake with whom Sterne was on terms of the greatest intimacy. They were constantly in council over some trouble or complication, and we find the Vicar of Sutton often fixing to go into York and meet his friend. Many years ago Mr Hudson of York kindly placed the whole unpublished correspondence of the pair in my hands. Letters of Sterne are the rarest of autographs, and but few are known—I shall therefore give the whole correspondence in this place.

There would appear to have been constant expeditions to York for dinners, parties and concerts, of which Mrs Sterne seems to have had her fair share. When her husband went to Newborough to meet Lord Falconberg, she went too. The next even-

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ing she was 'engaged to the Cowpers,' while he, passionately fond of music, had set his heart on going to the York concert with his friend Fothergill.

These conferences seem to have borne some fruit; and, later, Mr Sterne is glad to hear 'some of the rubbish is removed, in order to your edification, which, I hope, will not be long delayed.' And then we get a characteristic glimpse of the Sterne conjugal relations. 'I tore off,' writes Mr Sterne to Mr Blake, 'the bottom of yours before I let my wife see it, *to save a lye*. However, she has since discovered the curtailment, and seem'd very desirous of knowing what it contain'd—which I conceal, and only say 'twas something that no way concerned *her or me*; so say the same if she interrogates.' That little '*to save a lye*' was plainly a little awkward secret of Mr Sterne's, and it is curious to find him writing his friend to tell a lie to 'save a lye.'

These difficulties being accommodated, Mr Blake was anxious to see his friend at his house in York; and Mr Sterne having, in some way, incurred the enmity of some of the parties in the affair, writes a practical

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and sensible explanation of the motives for declining.

‘DEAR BLAKE,—It is not often, if ever, I differ much from you in my judgment of things, therefore you must bear with me now in remonstrating against the impropriety of my coming just at this *crisis*. You have happily now concluded this affair, w^{ch} has been so often upon the eve of breaking off, and my coming would be the most *unseasonable* visit ever paid by mortal man. Consider in what light Mrs Ash and Miss must have hitherto look’d upon me, and should it ever come to light that I had posted over upon this termination of y^r differences, I know it would naturally alarm them, and raise a suspicion I had come over to embroil matters. Things being already settled, ’twould be thought I could have no other errand. But you seem to have a forboding of the same evil by y^r desiring me to come *privately*. I have weighed the point wth my wife a full hour, and she thinks we should not stake the disgust y^t may possibly be given upon the *chance* of my coming being kept a secret; for if I

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come to-night I must stay all night, w^{ch} will discover it. If, to-morrow morning, both roads and streets will be full, as 'tis Martinmas day, and I declare I would not have my being with you known over the way for fifty pounds. I know you will do me the justice to believe I would run 7 times as far any other road to do you a 7th part of the kindness you ask. But I verily believe, w^{ch}, by the by, makes me easy at heart, in my present staying at home, that you will do as well without me. If I can be of service, it must be in case some unforeseen objection sh^d arise in either party, when you may whistle me to you in a moment's warning. However, my dear friend, if, after all, you think it necessary for you that we should have an hour's talk, I will give up my own judgm^t to y^{rs}, and come over early to-morrow morning, tho' I rather wish, as does my wife, you would be ruled by us; and depend upon y^r own good abilities, w^{ch}, I'm sure, are sufficient to carry you thro' now with *safety* and honor. I send my service to no mortal soul—and pray command y^r people to say nothing of y^r lad's being here to-day. I wish to God

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you could some day ride out next week, and breakfast and dine with us, w^{ch}, if you do, it would be wise, in my opinion, to make *no secret* of it, but tell the ladies you are going to take a ride to Sutton, to carry the welcome news to y^r friends, that every thing was happily concluded. Dear sir, accept our most hearty congratulations upon it, and believe me.

‘Y^{rs} most truly,

‘LAU^E. STERNE.

‘*P. S.*—My servant is in town to-night, and will be in town to-morrow, when I will order him to wait upon you. I had collected all your letters, and burn’t them before I rec^d y^{rs}.’

Besides some heavy farming operations, he was concerned for his little girl Lydia, who was ‘somewhat relapsing’—showing symptoms of that asthmatic affection for which he afterwards took her to France. He was waiting on the Dean, ‘Jack Taylor,’ and others, and seems to have had his hands full both at home, at Sutton, and when he came into York. At this time

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too, reappears that poor, tramping Agnes Hebert, his mother, who has come to York—possibly after the Irish school bankruptcy—to meet her son, who has, it may be well conceived, ‘much to say to her.’ He was busy even now arranging some of her difficulties, for he writes, ‘I trust my poor mother’s affair is by this time ended, to *our* comfort, and, I trust, to hers.’

Mr Blake’s ‘distemper,’ whatever it was, was, however, not mending, and again Mr Sterne writes one of his sensible letters, apparently referring to the marriage of his friend, full of sound, thoughtful advice, which may be set out at full length with profit:—

‘MY DEAR FRIEND,—We have ponder’d over the contents of y^{rs} again and again, and after the coolest and most candid consideration of every movement throughout this affair, the whole appears, what I but too shrewdly suspected, a contexture of plots agst y^r fortune and person, grand mama standing first in the dramatis personae, the Loup Garou or raw head and bloody bones to frighten Master Jacky into

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silence, and make him go to bed with Missy, *supperless* and in peace—Stanhope, the lawyer, behind the scenes, ready to be call'd in to do his part, either to frighten or outwit you, in case the terror of grand mama should not do the business without him. Miss's part was to play them off upon y^r good nature in their turns, and give proper reports how the plot wrought. But more of this allegory another time. In the meanwhile, our stedfast council and opinion is, to treat wth Stanhope upon no terms either in person or proxy. Consider the case a moment—Your proposals (w^{ch} I trust will be soon offered by you to M^{rs} Ash in writing) will either be accepted or refused by her at first sight. If they are accepted, he is not wanted to be treated with. If they are rejected, he is the most improper man. The person call'd in such a case sh^d be *your* friend, not one who will widen the breach and fortify them in their opiniatre, but a cordial, kind body who will soften matters and lessen the distance between you. Such a one is not Stanhope, nor could be in honor either as their kinsman or council. So I beg leave to repeat

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it again, keep clear of him by all means, and for this additional reason, namely, that was he call'd in either at first or last, you lose the advantage as well as opportunity of an honor^{ble} retreat w^{ch} is in y^r power the moment they reject y^r proposals, but will never be so again after you refer to him.

‘ I am, dear S^r,

‘ most truly Y^{rs},

‘ L. STERNE.’

Presently Mrs Sterne was ‘taking a wheel’ into York to dine with Mr Bridges, a pleasant friend of her husband’s, who was Mr Sterne’s fellow artist in a characteristic caricature, to be described later. ‘ We have 2 geoses for you,’ writes Mr Sterne to his cathedral friend; and later, sends one of the birds by a special messenger. ‘ The bearer,’ he writes in his genial way, ‘ has brought you one of your geoses, and should have brought myself with it for company, but that I stay and wait till the afternoon to see if my poor girl can be left. She is very much out of all sorts; and our operator here, though a very penetrating man,

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seems puzzled about her case. If something favorable does not turn out to-day about her case, I will send for Dealtry.' Not, it will be seen, for Dr Burton, who also had a reputation in York as a 'penetrating' man.

To Mr and Mrs Ash, Mrs Sterne also sent presents of 'gooses,' and the letter which accompanies the gift contains what seems to be the only pun of Mr Sterne's we are acquainted with. It, of course, referred to that Mr Stanhope, the solicitor, whom Mr Sterne had before painted in as a sort of arch-villain in the piece.

'Saturday.

'DEAR SIR,—My wife sends you and Mrs Ash a couple of stubble geese—one for each; she would have sent you a couple, but thinks 'tis better to keep y^r other Goose in our Bean Stubble till another week. All we can say in their behalf is, that they are (if not very fat) at least in good health & in perfect *freedom*, for they have never been confined a moment; I wish I could say as much of y^r worship—for I fear y^r affairs, as heretofore, confine & keep you in the dark,

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and if I am any conjurer, you are at this hour, just where I left you (if you will allow a pun) STAND HOPEING yourself to death—was there ever so vile a conundrum? Pray God, that may be the worst on't, so believe me to be, what I truly am,

‘Y^{rs} cordially,

‘L. STERNE.

‘*P.S.*—As the goose is for y^r mistress, my wife says, you must take the worst and send her the best, & that the next shall be better.

‘I preach on Sunday at the Cathedral. Will you give me a breakfast, if I get to York early? Or will you be out of town?’

The earlier letters in the series are concerned with plans for renewal visits, but Mr Sterne seems to have been always in a state of unreadiness, and is found putting off the expeditions he had planned on various hindrances and pretexts. The friends appear to have stayed at each other's houses, and the whole turn of the correspondence is easy

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and agreeable. Mr Sterne's name for his clerk, 'my Amen,' is quaint enough.

'DEAR SIR,—I see how your affairs approach to such a crisis, that no friendly office can be withheld by one who wishes you so well. But let me tell you the state of our affairs. To morrow we are indispensably obliged to be at Newborough (L^d F—g's) on Friday my wife has engaged herself in the afternoon at Cowper's—& I had both set my heart upon going to the Concert, & sent to engage Mr Fothergill to meet me there a little after three. However, from eleven that day to three, both me and my rib are at y^r service to club our understandings all together, and I'm sure we shall all be able in 4 hours to digest a much harder plann & settle it to y^{rs} and all our wishes; however, if any our plann should require a 2^d consideration we purpose being at Newbury on Saturday to see y^r Patron pass by, & you will know where to find me in case a half hours further conference should be wanted: If after these preliminaries are settled, I can be of use to you, you know you have no more to do but command me, & I shall be any day

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the week following at y^r service, except Munday which is our Appeal day for the Land Tax.

‘ We thank you for y^r kindness in speaking for M^r Hungton. (?) But we have plann’d it better.

‘ All our kind wishes & compliments to you & the ladies, with service to M^r Lowther,

‘ Y^{rs} very truly,

‘ L. STERNE.

‘ SUTTON, *July* 5, ’58.’

‘ DEAR BLAKE,—I send my Amen to enquire after you, never yet having been able upon any acct^t to get to you, the great confusion of *the Election* w^{ch} I hate as much as my friend Taylor does, kept me here during that period—& bad weather, bad roads, not good health, & much business, will not let me come for so long as I must stay when I do get to you, w^{ch} must be for 2 or 3 days—whether I will or no, I am forced out of *my shell* in Xmas week to preach Inn^{ts}. I hope all goes on successfully with you & y^{rs} since the age I’ve had the pleasure of seeing you—pray let me

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know it is so, & present all kind resp^{ts} to Miss C. &c. Pray tell me how long the Dean stays if you can—& if Taylor is in Town to whom my best services—If you have 8 or 4 of the last Yorks Courants, pray send one us, for we are as much strangers to all that has pass'd amongst you as if we were in a mine in Siberia.

‘ My wife & Lydia send all kind loves to you.—

‘ I am truly yours,

‘ L. STERNE.

‘ I hope you got y^r coat home safe, tho’ in what plight I fear as it was a rainy night & ten o’clock at night before we reach’d Sutton, oweing to vile accidents to w^{ch} Journiers are exposed.

{ ‘ Will you be so kind as to forward the
note to M^r Cowpers any time before noon.

There is no } ‘ I am, dear Sir, Your
note enclosed. } ‘ much obliged & faithful,

‘ L. S.

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'Monday.

'DEAR SIR,—I have transacted my Bristol Affair all but a small point left for y^r good nature, w^{ch} is to put letter in the Post to day & pay *postige yourself* for it to Mr Oldfield for w^{ch} I've inclosed 8^d it being a double letter. If Oldfield s^d suspect 3 letters instead of two you may open it to convince him. But I think he will take your word, tho' perhaps not a Servant's. The Express (when God sends it) Mons^r Apothecary will direct as agreed upon between us, & I think I have put the whole into such a train that I cannot well miscarry.'

'DEAR SIR,—I should have beat up y^r quarters before now, & but for the vile roads & weather, together with the crisis of my affairs namely the getting down my crop w^{ch} by the way is in danger of sprouting. However, I will come over at y^r desire, but it cannot be to morrow because all hands are to be employed in cutting my barley w^{ch} is now shaking with this vile wind—however the next day (Friday) I will be with you by twelve & eat a portion of y^r own dinner & confer till 8

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o'clock, in case the day is fair, if not the day after, &c., &c. My wife is engaged to dine at Cowpers the first travelleable day & comes with me. I think M^r Moor will not expect (w^t his letter does not require) an answer—however, will overhaul y^r matter with all others.

'My wife sends her comp^s & what is more her wishes for you in this crisis of y^r distemper w^{ch} I wish likewise was well got over. For 'tis full of mystery and I think cannot end as we all once hoped and expected,

'Believe me, Dear Sir,
'most truly y^{rs},

'L. STERNE.

'5 o'clock.—I beg pardon for detain^g y^r stockings w^{ch} was the Maid's forgetfulness but she has a sweetheart in her head, w^{ch} puts all other things out, this I'm sure you'll excuse.'

'Sunday Night.

'DEAR SIR,—Not knowing what Day I shall be able to get to York this week, having Business of so many sorts to detain

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me at home, I have order'd my Sinful Amen to wait upon You, That You might have an Opportunity of writing in Case you durst trust him a 2^d Time or had Leisure as well as courage so to do. When I come, I have 4 personages I equally want to see. The Dean, Jack Taylor, y^rself, & my Mother—& I have much to say to each, How I shall manage all in y^e narrow compass of a writers Day, I know not; but when I get to York, I think my first hour will be with you & so on. I believe my wife will be at York on Tuesday, to make her last Marketings for the year. But will dine I dare say with Duke Humphry, as my girl is somewhat relapsing & the Mother you may be sure, not a little impatient to be back;—I w^d have wrote on Saturday But in Truth, tho' I had both Time & Inclination, my Servants had neither y^e one nor the other, to go a yard out of their Road to deliver it—They having set out with a Wagon Load of Barly at 12 o'clock, & had scarce day to see it measured to the Maltsman. I have 4 Thrashers every Day at work, & they mortify me with declarations, That There is so much Barly they

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cannot get thro' that speces before X^{mas} Day, & God knows I have (I hope) near 80 Q^{rs} of Oats besides. How I shall manage matters to get to you, as we wish for 8 months.

' I thank God, however, I have settled most of my affairs—let my freehold to a promising tenent—have likewise this week let him the most considerable part of my tyths, and shall clear my hands and head of all county entanglements, having at present only ten p^{ds} a year in land and seven p^{ds} a year in Corn Tyth left undisposed of, w^{ch} shall be quitted with all prudent speed. This will bring me and mine into a narrow compass, and make us, I hope, both rich and happy. 'Tis only to friends we thus unbosome ourselves, so I know you'l excuse and believe me, y^{rs},

' L. STERNE.

' *P.S.*—Let me know how your affairs go on, and as distinctly as I have done mine.'

' SUTTON, *Saturday*.

' DR SIR,—This should have come to y^r hands yesterday morn^g (but was disappointed by a fellow who promised to call for it) to

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have desired y^r Indulgences for my not being able to keep my word in being with you as I hoped and intended—nor can we for our souls leave home this day for reasons I shall tell you when I see you w^{ch} will be very soon, but I cannot fix w^{ch} of the three first days of the week it will be. It shall be the first in my power, for I want to see you full as much as you do to see me. In the meantime we hope 'twil be no Difference to your affairs whether Monday or Wednesday. My wife I told you is engaged & as I come alone I take pot luck. God bless & direct you in the meantime & believe me y^{rs}

‘with all respects,

‘L. STERNE.

‘To the Rev^d Mr Blake.’

‘DEAR SIR,—It was very kindly done in you to send me the Letter to Sutton, & I thank you for y^t & all other friendly offices. But for the future you shall not be at such a trouble unless something *extraordinary* makes it adviseable, Because as you will always first peruse the acc^{ts}, I am perfectly easy ab^t what is in y^{rs} knowing you will do

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for me as for y^{rs}elf. You perceive That he will write from time to time to give us a proper preparation in Case the Event sh^d happen, upon w^{ch} preparation given by him it will be time enough for us to plann something more particular than what is done already, & it will be time enough when he writes me word That He grows worse, to settle the Matter of the Express with him in my Answer to that Acc^t. My wife joins in her kind Thanks to you with me for this—and I beg you'l

‘believe me, Y^{rs},

‘L. S.

‘*P.S.*—We decamp'd in such a Hurry on Sunday morn^g I could not snatch a moment to run to bid you adieu. But I know You excuse Formalities, w^{ch} by the by, I am a most punctilious regar^der of wth all. But my Friends—L^d Carlisle* I suppose is not dead tho' Irrecoverable.

‘To The Reverend Mr Blake.’

* [Richard Osbaldeston, to whom Sterne dedicated his first printed sermon. He became in turn Bishop of Carlisle and Bishop of London. His critical condition to which reference is made here cannot refer to the illness that ended with death in 1764. The reference must be to some previous alarm for the Bishop's life.]

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‘DEAR BLAKE,—Tho I know you could not possibly expect us on so terrible a day as this has fallen out, yet I could do no less than send over on purpose to testify our concern for not being able to get to you. We have waited dress’d and ready to set out ever since nine this morning to 12 in hopes to snatch any intermission of one of the most heavy rains I ever knew, but we are destined not to go for the day grows worse and worse upon our heads, and the sky gathering in on all sides leaves no prospect of any but a most dismal going and coming, and not wthout danger as the roads are full of water. What remains, but that we undress ourselves.

‘Since you left us, we have considered (you know w^t) in all its shapes and circumstances, and the more the whole is weighed, the worse and more insidious appears every step of the managem^t of that affair. God direct you in it, ’tis our hearty prayer, for I am, with my wife best respects to you,

‘truly yours,

‘Compt to ladies.

‘L. S.’

From these letters a good idea may be

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gathered of the Vicar's character, which was clearly that of a straightforward 'off-hand' man, with a curious suggestion of Sidney Smith. No one could associate them with the hypocritical, whining, sentimental lineaments that Mr Thackeray strove to draw. He was certainly, at this time at least, a hearty, pleasant fellow—good-natured, too. Witness the strain of this unpublished letter:—

‘SUTTON, *Wednesday*.

‘DEAR SIR,—I have sent you a large Quantity of Pepiermint wh^h I beg you will disstil carefully for me. I observe you do not charge anything in y^r letter for the trouble and expense of making the last. I beg you'l not use any ceremony with this, for I hoped you would take it *in pence*. However, you may give Ricord a single bottle, and if y^r own shop is destitute of so precious a vehicle, I give you leave to do the same for yourself.’

But he was drawn into a local squabble connected with the Cathedral, and in which he was to make his first attempt at satirical writing.

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Among the officials of the Cathedral was a certain Dr Topham, a lawyer, who enjoyed great local practice, and left a large fortune behind him. A fortune which his son, later, seems to have squandered in town in unbounded prodigality. This son was sent to Cambridge — was put into the Horse Guards — and drove a curricule with four black horses.* He is better known, perhaps, as the biographer of Elwes, the miser, but always took most pleasure in the thought that he had furnished the occasion of Mr Sterne's first taking up his pen. For it was he that brought about a tremendous controversy in the cathedral society.

Dr Topham, in addition to his other offices, had obtained a patent place for himself, and, not content with this advantage, intrigued to have the reversion of it secured to this gay son. The Dean, in whose gift it was, seems to have resisted this pressure, and the result was a cathedral squabble, fought with all the weapons of verbal recrimination and pamphlets.

This little scandal broke out in the year

* Frederick Reynold's 'Memoirs.'

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1758, but its origin dated much further back, to a promise said to have been given by Archbishop Herring to Dr Topham, whom Mr Sterne describes as a 'little, dirty, pimping, pettifogging, ambidextrous fellow, who neither cared what he did or said of any-one, provided he could get a penny by it.' He united in his single person this wonderful combination of offices:—'Master of the Faculties,' 'Commissary to the Archbishop of York,' 'Official to the Archdeacon of York,' 'Official to the Archdeacon of the East Riding,' 'Official to the Archdeacon of Cleveland,' 'Official to the Peculiar Jurisdiction of Howdenshire,' 'Official to the Precentor,' 'Official to the Chancellor of the Church of York,' and 'Official to several of the Prebendaries thereof.' Yet this rapacious civilian was not satisfied.

Dr Hutton had but just ascended the throne episcopal, when the pluralist, Dr Topham, began to be very assiduous in his attentions. 'He had run for eggs,' says Mr Sterne, telling the story satirically, 'in the town upon all occasions, whetted the knives at all hours, caught his horse, and rubbed him down; that for his wife, she

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had been ready on all occasions to char for them, and neither he nor she, to best of his remembrance, ever took a farthing, or anything beyond a mug of ale.' *Trim* is the name Mr Sterne gives to this greedy petitioner—a name which seems to have pleased his fancy, as he afterwards confers it on a being of a very different mould, and the direct opposite of Dr Topham in all the unselfish virtues.* 'The Patent Place' was described under the figure of an old Watch-Coat, that had hung up many years in the church, 'and nothing would serve *Trim*, but that he must take it home, in order to have it converted into a *warm under-petticoat* for his *wife*, and a *jerkin* for himself.' The Archbishop, who appears to have been an easy and compassionate man, wearied out by importunity, gave the promise required. Later on, however, he finds that he has been a little hasty, and that the Patent Place, or *Warm Watch-Coat*, was by the terms of its endowment to be strictly for the benefit of some one connected with the

* It will thus be seen that there was a Trim before the immortal Corporal. The name is also amongst Shadwell's *dramatis personæ*. [Mr Trim is a character in Shadwell's *Bury-Fair*.]

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Cathedral: that is to say, 'to the sole use and behoof of the poor sextons, and their successors for ever, to be worn by them respectively in winterly cold nights.' Dr Hutton then finding he had promised more than was in his power, sends for Dean Fountayne, and in his presence explained to '*Trim*' how impossible it was for him to comply with his wishes. The pluralist lost his temper, 'huffed and bounced most terribly, swore he would get a warrant . . . but cooling of that, and fearing the Parson' (who is put for the Archbishop) 'might possibly bind him over to his good behaviour, and, for aught he knew, might send him to the House of Correction—he lets the Parson alone, and to revenge himself falls foul upon the Clerk,' *i.e.*, the Dean. This minor embroilment set on foot the clerical scandal, and the York society was delighted by an indecent wrangle between the Dean of their Cathedral and the Official of many Offices.

Dean Osbaldiston was the dignitary who had heaped 'many favours and civilities' upon Mr Sterne, which are acknowledged in the dedication to that Charity Sermon preached in the year 1747. But perversely

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enough, unluckily in this very year of the dedication, the 'Very Reverend Richard Osbaldiston, D.D., Dean of York,' was translated away from York to a distant bishopric. To him succeeded Dr Fountayne, on whose side Mr Sterne was now doing battle. From this dignitary, the persevering Topham gave out that he had obtained a promise of a place, which bore the title of 'The Commissaryship of Pickering and Pocklington,' and whose value was five guineas per annum, and which Mr Sterne in his satire prefigures under the title of the 'Breeches.' The Dean publicly denied having made any such promise; and it was said that an unpleasant altercation took place at the public 'Sessions Dinner' between the two. Great scandal was the result; the Cathedral was divided; charges of falsehood and want of faith were exchanged, and both, appealing to a larger public, took the field with pamphlets.

Presently, a third quarrel broke out between the Dean and the Archbishop, which, as may be conceived, raised much more heat and dust. The affair was about some point of ecclesiastical discipline, which is hidden

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away under the figure of raising or lowering the desk in the Cathedral. 'The Archbishop,' said Mr Sterne, 'might have his virtues, but the leading part of his character was not *humility*,' and with this Prelate the disappointed Commissary took part. Fortified by such protection, he one day snapped his fingers at the Dean.

After this contemptuous rejection of the 'five guinea' emoluments of 'Pickering and Pocklington,' the Dean—in Mr Sterne's version of the case—asked if he would have any objection to let '*Mark Slender*' have the office: that is to say, Dr Braithwaite—who, it will be recollected, was one of Dr Burton's persecutors. An appeal was made to his pity. The breeches would scarcely fit *Trim*, 'who was now, by foul feeding and playing the good fellow at the Parson's, growing somewhat gross about the lower parts.' But the fact was, the pluralist expected better things; 'the great green pulpit cloth and old velvet cushion,' which would have 'made up the loss of the breeches seven-fold.' This was the 'Commissaryship of Dean of York, and Commissaryship of Dean and Chapter of York.'

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The Cathedral seemed to abound in these curious little offices. '*Mark Slender*,' or Dr Braithwaite, did not live very long to enjoy the profits of his office; and then 'they got into the possession of *Lorry Slim*, an unlucky wight, by whom they are still worn—in truth, as you will guess, they are very thin by this time.' There is no difficulty in identifying '*Lorry Slim*,' and this insignificant bit of preferment, which made such a hubbub, shows that he was of consideration with the higher powers, and a person of importance in the Cathedral battles.* This special quarrel, too, shows us a glimpse

* So far back as the 29th of December, 1750, Mr Sterne had been sworn in as 'Commissary of the Peculiar Court of Alne and Totteston' (an office of the same class as the one then in dispute), and appointed his surrogates. The duties appear to have been confined to the issuing of marriage licences, etc., and the emoluments were very insignificant. Thus, from the 18th of June, 1765, to the 25th of October, 1766, Mr Sterne received but £2, 1s. 4d. (His registrar, Mr Makley, has an entry in December, 'Paid Mr Sterne, thus far, £2, 1s. 4d.' And during seven months of the year in which Mr Sterne died, the returns reached but to 5s. 4d. Mr Sterne, however, made his annual 'Visitation of the Clergy and Churchwardens of the Parishes of Alne, Wigginton, and Skelton,' with great regularity. The following are the dates:—

10th June, 1751.	28th July, 1755.
6th July, 1752.	5th July, 1756.
28th May, 1753.	25th July, 1757.
1st July, 1754.	30th May, 1758.

After this year he became irregular, and left the duty to his surrogate. Mr Sutton, the Deputy Registrar, has the original book with these entries, which he has kindly allowed me to use.

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of his character drawn by Yorick himself, and which may be added to the personal sketch given in *Tristram*. 'But Lorry has a light heart, and what recommends them to him is this, that thin as they are, he knows that *Trim*, let him say what he will, still envies the possessor of them, and with all his pride, would be very glad to wear them after *him*.' Still the unlucky Topham seems to have gotten upon a groove of ill-luck, for when the 'pulpit cloth' and 'cushion' were presently taken down, they were given away, not to him, but to one '*William Doe*,' that is, to Mr Stables, who understood very well what use to 'make of them.' It may be conceived what a soreness and ferment of parties this contention for places and disappointment brought about among the holy men of the Cathedral.

When it came to the 'Session's Dinner' squabble—which was at Mr Woodhouse's—and the pamphlets were fluttering in the air, Mr Sterne rushed to the assistance of his friend, Dean Fountayne, and, sitting down, wrote his first Shandean Essay. It is pleasantly done, and though somewhat ponderous in portions of the allegory, is in

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his smartest manner ; but some of the strokes are too personal.

No doubt this little petard was shown about as was the first portion of *Tristram*. It was about being printed when the Commissary grew alarmed. The dispute was accommodated, and the satire put by in Mr Sterne's desk.

The ferment is in itself not without its interest, a little photograph of the old cathedral life ; but more significant still is it as a solution of the secret of that persecution of which Yorick bewailed himself as being the victim. If Mr Sterne suffered, that smart tongue and ready pen were in part accountable.

At this time he was unfortunately on the worst possible terms with his uncle. In the Warm Watch-Coat dispute the pluralist was, of course, on the side of Topham, who was his own official, and it might have been thought that his nephew's share may have led to the quarrel. It was, however, of older standing, and my uncle's 'wickedness'—as he called it—had been at work before 1751.

**A SECOND LOVE — ‘ DEAR, DEAR
KITTY ’**



CHAPTER VIII

A SECOND LOVE—‘DEAR, DEAR KITTY’

IN this fashion the years glided away, until we touch the year 1759. And though this time has been marked by a certain stir and bustle, by local intrigue, and by public dangers and calamities, still Mr Sterne has hardly begun to live his life. Yet he is now just forty-six years old; and that famous ‘homunculus,’ Tristram, not thought of.

It was about this time that he was often met with at Scarborough, whose ‘spaw’ was then rising into repute—a place which all through his life he was fond of visiting. Young Mr Cradock—who was well known behind the scenes of private theatricals, and afterwards had his indifferent Epilogue attached to one of Goldsmith’s famous comedies—recollected meeting him there. There was a well-known physician of the place—

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Dr Noah Thomas—with whom Mr Cradock* used to dine; and at his table he met Mr Sterne, in such distinguished company as the Duke of York, the Marquis of Granby, Colonel Sloper, and Mr and Miss Cibber. Mr Sterne loved rolling his carriage along the beach, ‘with one wheel in the sea.’

We shall now begin to see ‘our hero in what must be considered his favourite and most effective character—that of lover, or perhaps philanderer. A notorious and successful philanderer he always was. ‘Let me be wise and religious, but let me be man.’ Here is his professional declaration. ‘*I myself must ever have some Dulcinea in my head.*’ All this was as candid as it was true. Through his life he carefully nourished some gentle passion—it harmonised and allured the soul, and made him comfortable and happy. Philandering of this kind causes much distress, however, to the other party concerned, who feels acutely after the lover has ‘cantered off on his haunches.’ Unfortunately, in Mr Sterne’s case, his ‘amorous propensities,’ as Johnson

* [Consult Joseph Cradock, *Literary and Miscellaneous Memoirs*, I. 9, London, 1826.]

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called them, were not found within such harmless limits. The Lothario had much to recommend him for this *rôle*—there was something attractive in his bearing and talk. His delicate frame, his odd but brilliant face and lively talk—wit and sentiment mingled—all commended him to the fair. There was safety, too, in his cloth.

With this preface we may draw up the curtain. And so ‘softer visions, gentler vibrations,’ shall now visit him; ‘the lute, sweet instrument! of all others the most delicate—the most difficult! how wilt thou touch it, my dear Uncle Toby?’ And yet how much more ‘delicate’ and ‘difficult’ to deal with here! which is yet a task most necessary in a life of Sterne, to be now attempted in all sincerity, and with candour.

At ‘Mrs Joliff’s, in Stonegate,’ only a few streets from the mansion of Richard Sterne, was now residing a young French lady with her mother. They belonged to a Huguenot family, who had been forced to leave France on account of their religious opinions, and had found their way to York. Her name was Catherine de Fourmantelle,

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and she seems to have been possessed of much personal attraction.*

The family itself was called 'Beranger de Fourmantelle,' and once held estates in St Domingo. An elder sister remained in France, having conformed to the established faith. Miss Fourmantelle and her mother came to York.

To Miss Fourmantelle Mr Sterne was now writing ardent letters, addressing them to 'Dear, dear Kitty,' which documents that lady put by faithfully, and cherished as Mrs Sterne had put by *her* treasures, by this time sad fossils enough. By-and-by they passed into the hands of 'Mrs Weston,' her friend, who indorsed upon them a little history of the conclusion of the adventure. Most of them are scarcely more than flying scraps, indited in Mr Sterne's chronic hurry. Many are without date, one with a wrong date, whose error is apparent from the context, and all are distinguished by some curious spelling.†

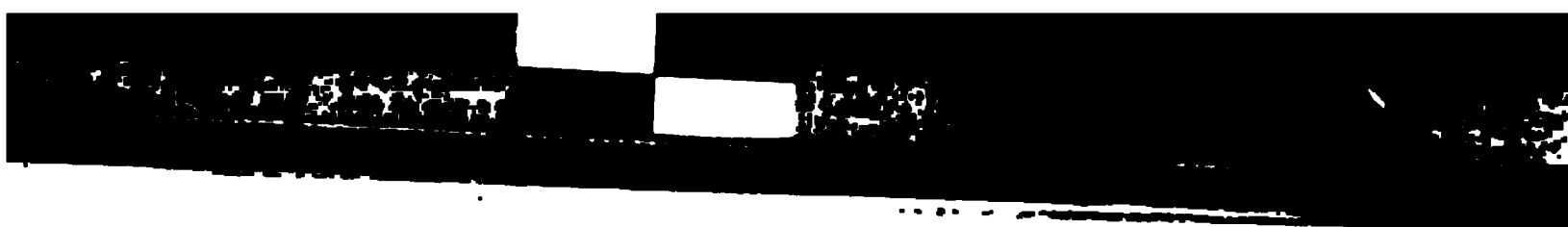
* The details of this little episode are derived from the curious letters printed by the Philobiblon Society, and edited by the late Mr Murray. [For these letters and Murray's preface, see Letters XXV.-XXXVII. in this edition.]

† It is an interesting question this of the spelling in the last century. Dr Johnson and other eminent personages, in their

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Contemporaneously with this attachment—which, it may be presumed, like all Mr Sterne's *grandes passions*, 'was the tenderest ever human wight was smitten with'—Mr Sterne was busy with the first portion of famous 'TRISTRAM SHANDY;' and there can be no question but that by this accident 'Dear, dear Kitty' has received a certain immortality, from being niched into the eighteenth chapter, under the thin disguise of 'My dear, dear Jenny.' 'It is no more than a week from this very day—which is March 9, 1759—that my dear, dear Jenny—observing I looked a little grave, as she stood cheapening a silk of five-and-twenty shillings a yard—told the mercer she was sorry she had given him so much trouble, and immediately went and bought herself a yard-wide stuff of tenpence a yard.' Mr Sterne was perhaps rather over-fond of standing in shops, both in Paris and elsewhere, philosophising over the counter with young and pretty ladies.

He deprecates the construction which letters, wrote easily, and it would seem to be that in letter-writing a certain licence was allowed. People seemed to write according to phonetic rules—words could be written in different ways without impeachment of spelling. In print only there was a fixed standard.



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‘I shall insist upon it that you invent some plausible excuse to be at home.’ This is signed, ‘Yours, YORICK.’

After one Saturday night at ‘Mrs Joliff’s in Stonegate,’ with Mrs Fourmantelle and her daughter, when they had stayed up very late, Mr Sterne writes the following Sunday morning to tell her that ‘if this billet catches you in bed, you are a lazy, sleepy little slut,’ and proposes to see her at a Mr Taylor’s—the Mr Taylor that figured in the Blake embarrassments—at ‘half an hour after twelve;’ and he has ordered his man Matthew ‘to steal her a quart of honey.’ For the strain of rapture in which portions of the correspondence are couched, it would be unbecoming to offer a word of palliation. ‘What is honey to the sweetness of thee who are sweeter than all the flowers it comes from?’ ‘I love you to distraction, Kitty, and will love you to eternity,’ with more to the same effect. There is a curious expression in one of these letters which shows that he intended marrying the girl in case of his wife’s death. ‘I have *but one obstacle*, he wrote, ‘to my happiness, and what that is you know as well as I.’ Again he appeals to a higher

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power—‘God will open a dore, when we shall some time be much more together.’ And again: ‘I *pray* to God that you may so live and so love me as one day to share in my great good fortune.’ Anyone who recklessly puts himself in so suspicious a situation—however pure his motives—cannot complain if posterity naturally judges him by the presumption of ordinary evidence. But for the feeling which could prompt him to calculate on the death of his wife, and already settle on her successor, nothing is to be said. Curious to say, long after he was making a similar arrangement with the more famous Eliza Draper.

On the Thursday following arrived the pot of honey and the pot of sweetmeats, with a dainty letter quite in keeping, and which reads as quaintly as though it came from an Elizabethan lover:—

‘MY DEAR KITTY,—I have sent you a pot of sweetmeats and a pot of honey, neither of them half so sweet as yourself; but don’t be vain upon this, or presume to grow sour upon this character of sweetness I give you; for if you do, I shall send you

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a pot of pickles (by way of contrarys) to sweeten you up and bring you to yourself again. Whatever changes happen to you, believe me that I am unalterably yours and according to your motto such a one, my dear Kitty—

“*Qui ne changera pas que en mourant.*”

‘L. S.’

‘*Qui ne changera pas que en mourant!*’ This from the Reverend Mr Yorick! Well may the cynic smile who has seen the long train of Mr Sterne’s ‘flames,’ in respect of whom he was ‘to change only in death.’ ‘My witty widow,’ ‘Lady P——,’ ‘Mrs H.,’ ‘Maria of Moulines,’ ‘Mrs Elizabeth Draper, wife of Daniel Draper, Esquire,’ the ‘Toulouse’ lady, and the whole company of grisettes, which reads like the perfect *mille è tre* of Leporello’s list; for all of whom he was ‘to change only in death.’

Presently Mr Sterne is sending, not a ‘pot of sweetmeats,’ but a more serious gift, ‘the enclosed sermon,’ which proved to be his Good Friday charity sermon on Elijah, of which he had, do doubt, some

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copies in his desk. He sends it because 'there is a beautiful character in it of a tender and compassionate mind in the picture given by Elijah. Read it, my dear Kitty, and believe me when I assure you that I see something of the same kind and gentle disposition in your heart which I have painted in the prophet's.' He had the 'pleasure to drink your health last night, and, if possible, will see you this afternoon before I go to Mr Fothergill's' (Mr Fothergill was one of the ecclesiastical society—a prebendary, and a relation of the famous Dr Fothergill's). He is, in conclusion, her 'affectionate and faithful servant, LAURENCE STERNE.' From this more formal signature as well as from its more subdued tone, and the reference to the Elijah sermon, this letter would seem to belong to the earlier days of their acquaintance.

We must now lose sight of 'Dear, dear Kitty' for a short time; Mr Sterne being busy with far more important matters—in fact, laying the foundation for his fame. Miss Fourmantelle shall appear again presently, when Mr Sterne's letters to her become of far more value than mere rhapsody.

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dical effusions, being written from London in the first jubilee of his whirl of triumph.

What was the ultimate destiny of 'Dear, dear Kitty' is not known; but Mrs Weston, the friend before alluded to, actually took the trouble to indorse upon the bundle of letters a rather ghastly bit of romance—quite apocryphal—which is only worthy of notice for the purpose of showing what a curious confederacy there has been to vilify the memory of the great humorist in every possible way. This sets out that Mr Sterne had paid his addresses to her for five years, then suddenly deserted her and married Mrs Sterne. That by this cruelty she lost her wits, and was taken over to Paris by her eldest sister to be placed in a madhouse, in which gloomy place of confinement she died. Mr Sterne, however, during some of his pleasant visits to Paris, had contrived to see her; and with a practical eye utilised all the sentiment in the situation, working it up effectively in that well-known 'bit,' 'Maria of Moulines.'

A reference to a single date disposes of this clumsy 'sensation' scene. Mr Sterne was married in 1740; and we find Miss

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Fourmantelle, in all her charms, intimate with him twenty years afterwards, viz., in 1760. No one has suffered so much from these fabrications as Mr Sterne. These were some of the weapons which Eugenius warned him 'Revenge and Slander, twin-ruffians,' were to level at his reputation.*

* This positive statement, however, as to Kitty's disastrous fate, though mixed with error, may be in the main true; and it may be that on being 'cast off' by her admirer—which it would seem she was, in the first flush of his success—she thus lost her wits.

**‘TRISTRAM’ WRITTEN AND
PUBLISHED**



CHAPTER IX

‘TRISTRAM’ WRITTEN AND PUBLISHED

CONCURRENTLY with these pursuits —amatory and political—the parson of Sutton was busy with what he, no doubt, then considered pure trifling; but which was to bear him more fruit than infinite turns of the obscure wheel of Yorkshire politics. Busy with an ambitious attempt—a strange, rambling novel, based upon some of those quaint models with which his mind was stored; by which, too, his reputation as a satirist might be increased, and with the introduction of local allusions, and characters thinly veiled—he was, in short, scribbling away at *Tristram Shandy*.

It seems probable that the work was begun about the month of January, in the year 1759, and that the two first volumes of *Tristram* took about six months to write and print. He has himself let fall a hint

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or two which helps us roughly to estimate his rate of progress.

Candide, Voltaire's famous romance, had appeared that year, and Mr Sterne had barely written a few chapters when he broke into an address to Fame, begging of her, 'if not too busy with Miss Cune-gunde's affairs,' to look down upon *Tristram*.^{*} And at the seventy-seventh page of his first volume he makes a remark on the 'irregularity' of national temper; which he says was 'struck out' at the very moment he was holding the pen, viz., 'On this very rainy day, March 26, 1759, between nine and ten in the morning.' Some thirty pages further back he again marks the time at which he was writing—'This very day in which I am now writing this book for the edification of the world,' which is March 9, 1759 (a week after the time that 'dear, dear Jenny' and he stood 'cheapening a silk'). Going backwards in a rough fashion, according to this scale, January would be about the date he began his first chap-

^{*} It is curious that three such famous books as *Rasselas*, *Candide* and *Tristram Shandy* should have appeared almost in the same month. [*Rasselas* and *Candide* appeared in March, 1759; and *Tristram Shandy* in the following December.]

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ter. His fashion of scribbling must have been quite in character and truly Shandean. He owns to wearing a special fur cap, and had a fancy for a cane chair with nobs at the top. He usually wrote very fast, so that literally his pen guided him, not he his pen; and his way of writing was of that irregular, spasmodic, disorderly, and even uncleanly kind.

Even as he wrote he was suffering from his health, and that affection in his chest to which he was subject 'from the first hour I drew my breath in to this, that I can now scarce draw it at all.' A 'vile asthma' always tormented him; that periodic breaking of vessels in the lungs was always in ambush, as it were, for him. He had been tempted to try Bishop Berkeley's famous and fashionable recipe of tar-water. Mr Sterne had tried this nauseous remedy, and writes to a female correspondent of his, that 'it has been of infinite service.' He gave a York friend *Berkeley's Querist* and *Swift's Directions to Servants*, bound up together, and put in the beginning a humorous inscription:—'Laurence Sterne to . . . with B. Berkeley . . . Going through a course

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of tar-water for the pleasure committed of sitting up till three in the morning.' *

Word, too, had gone forth as to the special character of the work. As originally written, it was a mere local satire—levelled at well-known persons in York and Yorkshire. Possible he meant in this way to retaliate upon Yorick's persecutors. His enemies were not slack upon such an occasion, and it was well understood that he 'was busy writing an extraordinary book.' He even knew the parties by name who were working in the dark. 'I shall not,' he writes to Mrs Ferguson, 'pick out a jury amongst.....and, till you read my *Tristram*, do not, like some people, condemn it. Laugh, I am sure you will, at some passages.' And the 'witty widow's' laugh was to be, by-and-by, swelled into a mirthful chorus in which the whole kingdom joined.

It is curious that he should not have thought of dedicating his book to some powerful protector. Later on, however, when his London triumph came, and a new edition of *Tristram* was getting ready, he found reason to change his mind.

* This volume was in the possession of Mr Gray of York.

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Mention has been made of the rumour that got abroad that the lively Mr Sterne was 'busy writing an extraordinary book,' which shows that Yorkshire and the town of York was watching his motions. It was of interest to them all to know that their witty Prebendary was at work on a comic novel, passages of which had no doubt been read to a few.

Yet if we may trust a curious letter from a friend of his, which stole into a magazine, these racy passages were written under circumstances of deep domestic trouble. Mrs Sterne was very ill at the time, having lost her senses by a stroke of palsy, and his daughter Lydia had caught a fever.

The first instalment—three* volumes—was finished before June, 1759; and was to be no exception to the destiny which has waited on the entrance of many famous works into the world. It was declined by the publishers. Nor was it surprising. In that month he wrote to Dodsley, offering him the new book for £50, about the sum he would have been glad to receive for the dedication. But the wary publisher declined the unknown work

* [*Two* volumes formed the first instalment.]

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of an obscure Yorkshire Prebendary, saying, 'that £50 was too much to risk upon a single volume, which, if it happened not to sell, would be hard upon his brother.'

Mr Sterne acknowledged the justice of this objection in a tone studiously modest, which contrasts amusingly with his later style, and proposed an arrangement upon a new basis. 'You need not be told by me how much authors are inclined to over-rate their own productions. I hope I am an exception.' Then in the same retiring way he submits this arrangement: 'I propose therefore to print *a lean edition*, in two small volumes of the size of *Rasselas*, and on the same paper and type, at my own expense, merely to feel the pulse of the world, and that I may know what price to set on the remaining volume from the reception of the first.' If the 'lean edition' (how characteristic this description) should have 'the run our critics expect,' he proposed following up his success with an instalment every six months. 'If my book fails of success,' he goes on, 'the loss falls where it ought to do. The same motives which inclined me first to offer you this

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trifle, incline me to give you the whole profits of the sale (except what Mr Hinxham sells here, which will be a great many), and to have them sold only at your shop upon the usual terms in these cases.'

Further, he will have it printed at York, but 'printed so as to do no dishonour to you, who, I know, never choose to print a book *meanly*.' The publisher may then have objected that the satire was too local. For Mr Sterne, assures him, he had actually recast this book, cut away all provincial allusions, had made 'the satire general, notes are added where wanted, and the whole made more saleable, about 150 pages added; and, to conclude, a strong interest formed and forming in his behalf.' *

It is not known what terms he did eventually make; but it seems likely, from what he wrote to a nameless doctor in the first flush of success, that it was a sort of speculative arrangement, with which, he owns, he proposed 'laying the world under contribution.' His book will be read enough 'to answer my design of raising a tax upon the

* See this letter, which embodies the substance of Dodsley's, in Dr Dibdin's *Reminiscences*. [Letter XXII. in this edition.]

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public;' which seems to hint that his pecuniary profit was to attend on the sale of the book.

A bookseller, living in Stonegate, close to where Miss Fourmantelle stopped, was to *exploiter* it in York: 'Mr John Hinxham, successor to the late Mr Hilyard.' And, at the end of December, in the year 1759, the famous romance of *Tristram Shandy* came out at York.

It took the shape of two miniature pocket volumes, prettily printed in new type, and on superior paper. It may after all have been printed in London, and by Dodsley's printer—for type, paper, and general shape resemble that of a certain *Enquiry* by one Dr Goldsmith, which was brought out that very year by the same publishers. Mr Sterne, too, showed his acquaintance with that odd class of eccentric little books, without name, date, or place of publication—the very foundlings of the republic of letters—when he sent forth *Tristram* under such conditions; for the first two volumes show nothing on the title but a 'colophon' and a date. The price was but five shillings for the two.

Those who took the *Publick Advertiser*, in

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the great metropolis, read in their number of Tuesday, the first day of the year, a modest advertisement of the new book.

‘*This day,*’ it ran, ‘is published, printed on superfine writing paper, and a new letter, in two volumes, price 5s., neatly bound, *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman. York.* Printed for and sold by John Hinxham (successor to the late Mr Hilyard), Bookseller in Stonegate; J. Dodsley, in Pall-mall; and Mr Cooper, in Paternoster-row, London; and by all the booksellers in Great Britain and Ireland.’ This notice appeared once or twice.

It threw York into a perfect commotion. Everyone in the cathedral town rushed to buy. Within two days, the bookseller had disposed of two hundred copies, and the demand increasing. ‘The nobility and great folks,’ wrote Miss Fourmantelle, to London, ‘stand up mightily for it, and say ’tis a good book.’ Everybody, she said, was talking of the ‘witty smart book;’ nor did they find much to object to in the fact that it was ‘a little tawdry in some places.’

On the last day of the year there was a concert at the York Assembly Rooms, at which were the ‘nobility and great folks,’

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and the brilliant Prebendary himself. There he met the young French *émigrée* lady, Miss Fourmantelle, and talked with her over the triumph of the new book, and told how he had sent up some copies to London. And the next day the young French lady sat down and wrote to an influential London friend a letter, whereof the text was the new book, pure and simple.

The London friend is entreated to get it and to read it, and, above all, to praise it *partout*, because his 'good word in town will do the author, I am sure, great service.' She owns that the 'graver people say, 'tis not fit for young ladies to read, so perhaps you'll think it not fit for a young lady to recommend.' She then tells him it is by a person whose name is Sterne, and praises him as 'a gentleman of great perferment, and has a great character in these parts as a man of learning and wit.' She half apologises for this warm advocacy, by adding that 'he is a kind and generous friend of mine, whom Providence has attached to me in this part of the world, where I came a stranger; and I could not think how I could make a better return

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than by endeavouring to make you a friend to him and his performance. This is all my excuse for this liberty, which I hope you will excuse.' In short, a prettily-written lady's letter. Unluckily for this candid appeal, there was found among the young lady's papers a draft of this London letter, in the actual handwriting of 'the great character in those parts as a man of learning and wit!' The clever Mr Sterne had written for the young French lady what she was to send to her friend!

The book, however, was not to need such helps. It does not, indeed, seem certain that the 'run' began at once, or, indeed, until Mr Sterne himself came up to town in March; for it was not until April that notices of its enthusiastic reception, then rife, were dropped in letters from London to the country. The second edition, too, did not come out until the middle of the year.* A month's 'rush for copies' would exhaust a small edition in these days; and in the memoir, which appeared when Mr Sterne first came upon town, it is stated

* [When Sterne reached London, early in March, the first edition was already exhausted. The second edition appeared on April 3, 1760.]

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that only a few copies were sent up to London at first, so little anticipation was there of anything like a serious demand at Mr Dodsley's establishment.

PETTY ANNOYANCES



CHAPTER X

PETTY ANNOYANCES

IN the month of November, before his book appeared, he had taken a house 'in the Minsteryard' for his wife and daughter, in order that the latter, being now some twelve years old, might have the advantage of such masters as York could afford. She was to begin dancing forthwith. Mr Sterne said if he could not give her a fortune, she should at least have a suitable education. Still, for all this hint at want of means, it is plain that he was in the habit of treating himself to visits to London, and had fixed an expedition for the March of the following year, as soon as the labour of publishing *Tristram* should have been off his hands.

It had been scarcely in the hands of the York lieges a month before the personalities, fancied or real, began to bear awkward fruit. He was worried by letters of expostulation,

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and a tide of good advice flowed in upon him from well-meaning friends. The *genus irritabile* of 'our Sydenhams and Sangrados' were specially sore. A strange passage in the first volume, which has mystified readers, was in that day perfectly intelligible, and resented. 'Did not Dr Kunastrokius,' he writes, 'that great man, at his leisure hours, take the greatest delight imaginable in combing of asses' tails, and plucking the dead hairs out with his teeth, though he had tweezers always in his pockets?' This, it seems, was pointed at the celebrated Dr Mead, whose intellects wandered a little at the close of his life, and whose malady took the shape of violent senile attachments. He was in the habit of sitting for hours together combing the back hair of his 'flames,' and picking out the short hairs with his teeth. 'This curious weakness,' says Mr Sterne in one of his letters, 'was known by every chambermaid and footman within the bills of mortality.'

There happened to be two country practitioners down in Mr Sterne's neighbourhood who had been married to daughters of the famous physician; and charitable fingers

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speedily pointed out to them the passage in the new book reflecting on their relation. These gentlemen, however, were not too sensitive; and it was stated in the London papers that 'they were no champions for his foible, and could meet Yorick without reproaches or blushings.' But an indignant doctor, a personal friend of Mr Sterne, wrote promptly to protest against this outrage on the dead; for Dr Mead was already gathered to his fathers. He insisted in many letters on the maxim, *De mortuis*, etc., and even hinted at 'cowardice;' and to him the author wrote an indignant justification of many pages, half serious, and altogether Shandean.

This medical friend, who writes from London, good-naturedly lets his clerical friend in the provinces know 'the general opinion of the best judges, without exception,' upon his book, which is to the effect 'that it cannot be put into the hands of any woman of character;' a verdict perfectly just. Mr Sterne insists that this view is taken merely from the 'little world of your acquaintance,' which it most likely was. 'I hope,' adds Mr Sterne, 'you ex-

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cept widows, doctor, for they are not all so squeamish; but I am told they are all really of my party, in return for some good offices done their interests in the 176th page of my second volume; . . . but for the chaste married, and chaste unmarried, they must not read my book. God take them under His protection in this fiery ordeal, and send us plenty of duennas to watch the workings of their humours till they have safely got through the whole work.' The London doctor, however, owned, a little grudgingly, that the book would be read enough 'to answer his design of raising a tax upon the public.' This was just at the commencement of the month of February; so that '*would* be read enough' was yet to come.

The picture of Dr Slop was at once appropriated by nearly every sensitive Sangrado in the district; the luckless author was waited on by injured members of the faculty, and called on with remonstrances, and even threats, to alter the personal strokes and colouring of his portrait. The 'ingenious Dr Burton,' at whom the wicked sketch was said to be aimed, boldly disclaimed

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all consciousness of any resemblance in the picture. But there were others scarcely so politic. An amusing interview is said to have taken place between the author and one of the injured guild. The latter complained bitterly of 'the indecent liberties' that had been taken with his character and person.

'Are you,' asked Mr Sterne, very calmly, 'a man-midwife?' 'No,' the medical remonstrant was constrained to answer. 'Are you a Roman Catholic?' 'No.' 'Were you ever splashed and dirtied?' 'Yes,' answered the other eagerly; 'and that is the very thing you have taken advantage of to expose me.' * This was Shandean, and must have amused Yorick wonderfully. But he composed his face, and strove, with all gentleness, to reason his visitor out of the notion that any offence was intended. Finding, however, that this course had no effect, he is said to have dismissed the sensitive mediciner with this quiet caution:—

'Sir, I have not hurt you. But take

* Memoir in the *Royal Female Magazine* for 1760. [This is given entire among the anecdotes in the first volume of *Letters and Miscellanies*.]

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care; *I am not born yet*, and you cannot know what I may do in the next two volumes.'

He supplements it by a declaration, which we may also accept as sincere, as to 'the ends proposed in commencing author;' which were—'first, the hope of doing the world good by ridiculing what I thought deserving of it, or of disservice to sound learning;' and secondly, 'I wrote not to be *fed*, but to be *famous*.' Both ends were fortunately attained. His purse was handsomely lined in the same proportion as his fame extended.

A clerical friend also wrote to him nervously about the irregular character of the new book. Mr Fothergill, a brother functionary of the cathedral, preached daily to him on the same text. 'Get your preferment first,' said this clergyman, taking certainly not very high moral ground, '*and then write and welcome*.' All, however, pressed on him the necessity of a certain amount of castration, in case the book should run to a second edition. To these well-meant remonstrances he answered very patiently, promised some excisions—will 'use

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all reasonable caution, but so as not to spoil my book; that is, the air and originality of it, which must resemble the author.' And another clergyman, 'a very able critic,' endorsed this view heartily, adding forcibly that 'that idea in his head would render the book not worth a groat.' He denied with reason that he had gone as far as Swift. 'He keeps a due distance from Rabelais, and I keep a due distance from him.' Still he was a good deal scared, and was inclined to give way. He tells his London medical friend that the propriety of alteration is even then (30th January) *sub judice*. He has even been driven to the project of getting his book put into the hands of his Archbishop, 'if he comes down this summer.' But, in truth, it was hard for him to know what to do; for were there not 'men of wit' and 'sound critics,' 'relishing' most the very passages for whose suppression the more moral were clamouring? No wonder that, harassed in this fashion, he should own to being barely above the level of despair.

There was one bit of consolation to cheer him. Even at this early date, before the

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book had time to make its way fairly, the most skilful actor of the day had penetration enough to discern its great and eccentric merits. The famous manager and actor had read it, and was, no doubt, taken by its wonderfully dramatic character. Garrick's 'favourable opinion' was promptly transmitted to the author, though with a certain ungraciousness; the candid friend who reported it to Mr Sterne hinting that 'he had done better in finding fault with it than in commending it.'

For these injudicious but well-meant remonstrances, which certainly took a rough and churlish shape, the country parson was presently—sooner indeed than he or the remonstrants were dreaming of—to have satisfactory indemnity. *Tristram Shandy* was now in the hands of the great public of London—it being now close on the month of March, 1760—and he was packing his mails to go up to London.

Hitherto he had not lived for the world. Neither had the men and women of fashion, nor the world of metropolitan politics, nor indeed any of the great collected coteries, which confer degrees and make reputations,

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bestowed a thought upon the obscure Yorkshire cleric. Now all is about to be changed. Now, as he said in one of his sermons, 'the whole drama is opened'—the splendid glories of success, and of London homage, are waiting for him.



VISIT TO LONDON



CHAPTER XI

VISIT TO LONDON

WHEN the now celebrated author arrived in town his success was already assured. 'No one,' writes Mr Forster, 'was so talked of in London this year, and no one so admired, as the tall, thin, hectic-looking Yorkshire Parson.' It may be questioned, indeed, if any author in England has since been socially so much the rage. 'East and west,' it was said, 'were moved alike.'

He arrived in the first week of March, and stayed for a day or two at rooms, whose locality is not known,* while he looked out for suitable apartments. 'The genteelest in town' meant to establish himself 'in Piccadilly or the Haymarket,' but settled himself before the day was over, in

*[Sterne went up to London with Stephen Croft, the Squire of Stillington. They lodged with their friend Mr Cholmley in Chapell Street.]

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rooms 'one door from St Alban's Street, in y^e Pell Mell.' Dodsley's, with the 'Tully's Head' over his door, was in the same street—number sixty-five—just opposite Marlborough House. It was a genteel quarter: and, three or four years later, another fashionable clergyman, the Rev. Dr Dodd, coming to London from an obscure suburban cure, also pitched his tent in Pall Mall.

It may be questioned if those rooms ever saw such a flood of fine company as then invaded them. He was not twenty-four hours in town before his triumph began. It was enough to have turned any ordinary mortal's head. He was already engaged to 'ten noblemen and men of fashion' for dinners, which shows that his coming must have been eagerly looked for. Mr Garrick was the first to take him by the hand, and overwhelmed him with favours and invitations. He had been the first, too, to discover the merits of *Tristram*. He asked him frequently to dine, introduced him to everybody, and promised 'numbers of great people' to carry the witty stranger to dine with them. He made him free of his theatre for the whole season, and undertook

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‘the management of the booksellers,’ and to procure ‘a great price.’ No wonder, indeed, that when Mr Sterne was writing down to the country to his ‘dear, dear Jenny’* an eager, agitated account of these honours, he should say that his friend ‘leaves nothing undone that can do me either service or credit.’ Neither was it extravagance of him to add, that he had the greatest honours and civilities paid him ‘that were *ever known from the great.*’

Even in this bewilderment he was mindful of his ‘dear, dear Jenny,’ and after the exciting day, when he was alone in his ‘genteel’ rooms, at ten o’clock, sat down to write a hurried and joyful letter, rapturously detailing his triumphs. All the news went to ‘Mrs Joliff’s, in Stone Gate;’ and from that source was, no doubt, filtered through York.

He tells her that he has arrived quite safe, all except that ‘hole in my heart which you have made.’ Unexpected success often imparts a general tenderness to the style; but it is hard to excuse the very warm tone of these raptures:—‘And now,

* [“Jenny,” here and below, is a slip for “Kitty.”]

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my dear, dear girl! let me assure you of the truest friendship for you that man ever bore towards a woman. Wherever I am my heart is warm towards you, and ever shall be till it is cold for ever.' There was in York another admirer who, it would appear, gave uneasiness to Mr Sterne; but to whom dear, dear Jenny had ordered herself to be denied, thus making Mr Sterne's heart inexpressibly 'easy,' and causing him to utter profuse and rapturous thanks. This person is darkly hinted at as 'you know who,' and curiously recalls another 'you know who,' who some years later disturbed an intimacy of Mr Sterne's with the famous Eliza. He assures his Kitty that it would have 'stabbed my soul to have thought such a fellow could have the liberty of coming near you.' He owns that he 'would give a guinea for a squeeze of your hand.' He does not conclude it until next day, when he is going to the oratorio:— 'Adieu! dear and kind girl! and believe me ever your kind and most affectionate admirer. Adieu! Adieu!

'P.S.—My service to your mamma.'

Miss Fourmantelle was too busy to reply;

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so a few days later he writes again, still in the same triumphant strain. Fashionable crowns are still being heaped on him. He has the same story to tell; his rooms are filling 'every hour' with 'your great people of the first rank, who strive who shall most honour me.' The following Monday he had fixed for a busy day, for returning the visits of all 'your great people' *en masse*. The current of dinners was still flowing steadily: Lord Chesterfield had asked him for that day; and Lord Rockingham, a young nobleman, who had the art of attaching friends nearly as strongly as Charles Fox, was to take him to Court the next Sunday. At the moment he was writing to 'my dear lass,' the room was full of visitors; still he made shift to snatch a moment to tell his 'dear, dear, dear Kitty'—on this occasion three times dear—that he was hers 'for ever and ever.'

But in that letter, too, was a very important piece of news, significant enough for the York gossip, yet far more significant for posterity. '*Even,*' he says, '*all the bishops have sent their compliments to me.*' Their compliments to the Parson-

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author of *Tristram*. Such encouragement is sufficient to account for all poor Yorick's future vagaries. After the tumultuous acclaim of 'your great people of fashion,' it only wanted the episcopal 'compliments' to make him lose his head. The episcopal 'Benedicite' may be accountable for the seven succeeding volumes of *Tristram*.

Still there was to be a little drawback. There were some people in the metropolis who regarded the new-made reputation with envy. And one morning Mr Garrick dropped in with what he deemed a droll rumour that was going round the town. That 'proud priest,' Warburton, had been appointed to the See of Gloucester early in the year, and his fierce controversies and insolent epithets were in everybody's mouth. It had been given out that Mr Sterne was already laying down the lines for his new volumes; and it was maliciously insinuated, that when *Tristram* was old enough to need a tutor, a ridiculous caricature of the Bishop would be introduced.* It was improbable on the face of it. The sensible author of *Tristram*,

* [Consult 'The Design of *Tristram Shandy*' and 'The First Biography of Sterne' in *Letters and Miscellanies*.]

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though the idea appears to have been suggested to him, was not likely to make so false a step, or to turn what might be a powerful patron into a dangerous enemy.

Mr Garrick mentioned it lightly, but it annoyed Mr Sterne terribly. 'It was for all the world like a cut across my fingers with a sharp pen-knife.' But he assumed an air usual on such accidents, of less feeling than he had. 'I saw the blood,' he goes on, a little affectedly, 'gave it a suck, wrapt it up, and thought no more about it.'

He availed himself of his box at Drury Lane that night, where the great actor 'astonished' him; came home, and as in the case of all mercurial spirits, with the loneliness of the night, the little troubles of the day came back on him. Before going to bed, he sat down, and, at eleven o'clock, wrote to the actor a truly Shandean epistle—all dashes and short paragraphs.

'What the devil,' he goes on, comically; 'is there no one learned blockhead throughout the many schools of misapplied science in the Christian world to make a tutor of for my *Tristram*? Are we so run out of stock that there is no one lumber-headed,

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muddle-headed, mortar-headed, pudding-headed chap among our Doctors, but I must disable my judgment by choosing a Warburton?' 'This report,' he adds, 'might draw blood of the author of *Tristram Shandy*, but could not harm such a man as the author of the Divine Legation, God bless him; though by-the-bye, and according to the natural course of descents, the blessing should come from him to me.'

Garrick was the friend of the Bishop, who was therefore likely to see some of these compliments. Warburton, too, had some experience of the 'lumber-headed,' 'mortar-headed' crew; and had been in many battles with the 'learned blockheads.' Mr Sterne turned this ugly rumour, which might have injured another man, into a stepping-stone for an acquaintance. 'Pray,' he writes, 'have you no interest, lateral or collateral to get me introduced to his lordship?'

'Why do you ask?'

'My dear sir, I have no claim to such an honour, but what *arises from the honour and respect which, in the progress of my work,*

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will be shown the world I owe to so great a man.'

Garrick was a warm and steady friend. He did not lose a moment in writing to Warburton; and on the next day, which was Friday, March the seventh, received an answer from the Bishop—one of those manly, admirably-written epistles which that strange prelate could write, and which seem to have a meaning far deeper than what is expressed. It is valuable, too, as a hearty testimony of his sincere affection for Garrick, as well as of the high character of Mr Sterne, which had reached him by repute.

'My dear Sir,' it ran, 'you told me no news when you mentioned a circumstance of zeal for your friends: but you gave me much pleasure by it and the enclosed, to have an impertinent story confuted the first minute I heard it.' Mr Sterne's Shandean note had therefore been sent under cover, as perhaps he anticipated. He then goes on—'For I cannot but be pleased, I have no reason to change my opinion *of so agreeable and so original a writer* as Mr Sterne—I mean *of his moral* character, of which I had received from several of my acquaint-

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ances *so very advantageous an account*. And I could not see how I could have held it, had the lying tale been true that he intended to injure one personally and entirely unknown to him. I own it would have grieved me, and so I believe it would him too (*when he had known me and my enemies a little better*), to have found himself in a company with a crew of the most egregious blockheads that ever abused the blessings of pen and ink.

‘However, I pride myself in having warmly recommended *Tristram Shandy* to all the best company in town, except that of Arthur’s. I was charged in a very grave assembly, as Doctor Newton can tell him, for a particular patroniser of the work, and how I acquitted myself of the imputation, the said Doctor can tell him. . . . If Mr Sterne will take me with all my infirmities I shall be glad of the honour of being well known to him; and he has the additional recommendation of being your friend.’ He then signs himself with a warmth unusual in intimacies between bishops and players—‘Your most affectionate and faithful humble servant, W. GLOUCESTER.’

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Nothing can be happier than the way in which he puts the possibility of the rumour being true, and of its result in Mr Sterne's finding himself in company with 'a crew of the most egregious blockheads'—which conveys a delicate hint of Mr Sterne's possible hostility being even prejudicial to his own interests. What sincerity there was in the Bishop's patronage, as well as in Sterne's disclaimer, and what seems the true history of his 'Purse of Gold' story, will be shown a little later.

All this was crowded into that first week of Mr Sterne's arrival.

Someway that glorifying him by dinners at this period seems to have been always associated with his name. For it was recollected years after, and was even mentioned at a certain dinner at General Paoli's, in the year 1778, of which party was Dr Johnson, Dr Goldsmith, and Signor Martinelli. 'The man Sterne,' said Johnson, in his characteristic idiom, 'I have been told, has had engagements for three months.' This he gave in illustration of what is a truth now, as it was then (ushering it in, too, with his usual 'Nay, sir'), that any man who has a name,

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or the power of pleasing, will be very generally invited in London.

These social ovations still go on, gathering as they go. From morning till night his lodgings are 'full of the greatest company. The dinner engagements still accumulate. For two days in succession he dined with Ladies of the Bedchamber. The next day Lord Rockingham invited him;—(Jaques Sterne, it will be remembered, had done this nobleman some election service). Then came Lord Edgecombe, Lord Winchelsea, Lord Littleton, a bishop, and many more. This sort of homage was flattering, but something more substantial was now coming.

Within two days, two pieces of good fortune befell him. The first took the rather Eastern shape of a purse of gold; the second was a very fair slice of Church preferment. The incident of the purse of gold seems almost unaccountable.

The Bishop of Gloucester, as we have seen, had responded heartily to his advances; and he may have been the one 'bishop' who had entertained Mr Sterne at his table in Grosvenor Street. Warburton was pre-

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pared to like him, and was delighted with *Tristram*. But it seems astonishing that his admiration should have taken the form of a purse of gold. Such largesse is surprising as coming from a man of his temper and character; and it seems no less curious that an eleemosynary offering of such a shape should be accepted by one in Mr Sterne's position. Whatever be the explanation, it must be taken as a token of boundless appreciation of Mr Sterne's merits. By-and-by the whole town came to hear of it, and extravagant stories and questionable motives were naturally enough imputed to both parties in the transaction.

The next day came the other piece of good fortune. Lord Falconberg, or Fauconberg, as it was spelt, was then at Court presently to be made a Lord of the Bed-chamber at sixty years of age. There was a pleasant perpetual curacy down in Yorkshire, not twenty miles from Sutton, in his gift, which happily fell vacant about this time; and the very day after the shower of gold descended from the episcopal Jupiter, the living was offered to Mr Sterne. He did not lose a moment in writing the glad

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tidings to 'dear Kitty,' whom the rush of honours had not quite driven out of his head. He wrote in a sort of transport, saying that now 'all the most part of my sorrows and tears are going to be wiped away.' This, it is to be presumed, was that local trouble or persecution so often before alluded to and aimed at in Yorick's Life. He then longs most impatiently to see 'my dear Kitty,' who was meditating a journey to London. He adds, that 'I have but one obstacle to my happiness now left, and what that is you know as well as I.' A significant declaration. What that obstacle is, the reader knows as well as Mr Sterne, or 'dear Kitty.'

How did Mr Sterne obtain this promotion? Writing to a titled lady friend of his, he seemed to take it as a matter of debt, saying he had 'done his lordship some service, and he has requited it.' But there is another tradition which has passed down from one curate of Coxwold to another, and is characteristic of Mr Sterne. When the news of the vacancy reached him, it was said that he at once waited on Lord Fauconberg, and reminded him of his old

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promise to give him the living. The nobleman looked surprised at this claim, and was, in fact, utterly unconscious of having bound himself by any such engagement. Mr Sterne, however, persisted. When his visitor was gone, Lord Fauconberg is said to have thought the matter over seriously; and doubtful whether it would be advisable to support his memory at the risk of turning on himself the wit and malice of a Yorkshire neighbour, who, at that moment, had a suppressed pamphlet lying in his desk, and was considered one of the humorists of London, wisely changed his purpose, and wrote to Mr Sterne that he was to have the benefice.

It seems an improbable legend, for which there is no chapter nor verse, and with but the idlest of traditions for foundation. But what effectually disposes of the tradition is, that Lord Fauconberg afterwards used to persecute him with hospitalities—of which Mr Sterne was to complain whimsically to his friends. No one who had been intimidated into a favour would be so forgiving.



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CHAPTER XII

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BEFORE this wonderful month of March was out, every day of which seemed to bring a new triumph for our clerical hero, he had been looking forward to the arrival of 'dear, dear Kitty' in the metropolis. Within that short span scarcely any man had made such progress, and he was anxious she should have a nearer view of his dazzling apotheosis. She was expected in the first days of April, but wrote to say she could not come until the seventeenth or eighteenth, which made Mr Sterne sad, 'because it shortens the time I hoped to have stole in your company when you come.' He then adds with some sentiment and more indifferent spelling:—'These separations, my dear Kitty, however grievous to us both, must be for the present. God,' he adds, 'will open a *Dore* when we shall sometime be more together.'

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He had been already thinking of setting out for Yorkshire, but could not resist staying for nearly five weeks more, in order to be present at a great pageant which was to come off in the second week in May. His patron, Lord Rockingham, and the victor of Minden, Prince Ferdinand, who was now in London receiving ovations, were to be installed Knights of the Garter down at Windsor; and Mr Sterne had been invited to go in the suite of Lord Rockingham. This distinction was too tempting to be resisted; so he had determined, nothing loth, as may be well conceived, to wait until the sixth. The flood of dinners had not even by that time spent its fury. He was actually keeping a sort of ledger in which his engagements were posted up. By the first of April he was bound for a fortnight in advance.

Many stories went round the town of his wit, his humour, and his repartees. It was told that the old Duke of Newcastle had said to him jocularly, 'that men of genius were not fit for work.' 'I think,' Yorick had replied, 'that the truth is, they are *above* work. My lord,' he went on, 'men

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may put any load upon a jackass, but a spirited creature is too good for such labour.' *

By this time he knew the great Sir Joshua, and had sat to him. The result was a matchless portrait—a head, indeed, 'such as Reynolds might have painted, mild, pale, and penetrating;' exquisitely characteristic and unconventional, and almost the best that master had done. Even in the copies to be found in the cheaper editions of his books, it was impossible to obscure the animation, the quiet thoughtfulness, the hint of suppressed Shandeism, that pervades the face. The attitude so original and insignificant, is familiar to all; the sly, thoughtful head, leaning upon the hand, whose forefinger is so significantly pointed. Altogether a great portrait—one of the gems of Lansdowne House. When the King of Denmark, Walpole's 'puppet of an hour,' was being lionised in London, the artists got up an exhibition of their choicest works. It was held in Spring Gardens: and Mr Reynolds, choosing out four

* This, though taken from an old jest book—a very indifferent authority—has a certain characteristic air that looks like truth.

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of his best pictures, placed this masterpiece — this ‘singularly fine portrait’ — as Northcote calls it, on the list.

This compliment was paid him at the wish of Lord Ossory, for whom the picture was painted. It later passed into possession of Lord Holland, after whose death it was purchased by Lord Lansdowne for five hundred guineas. It would now fetch many thousands.

Not yet have its delicate tones begun to fade, according to the fatal destiny which waits upon the Reynolds’ works. It was already in the engraver’s hands, and the result was to be a mezzotinto worthy of the painter, and one of the best of that matchless series which, at the end of the last century, came from the burins of M’Ardle, Smith, and many more. Well might Sterne write, that there was ‘a fine print going to be done of me. So I shall make the most of myself and sell both inside and out.’

Something more substantial, however, than portraits or dinners might now naturally be expected. A brilliant prebendary with a host of friends, fashionable and political, might not unreasonably look for good pre-

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ferment. That he had promises, and was confident of success, there can be no question. He hints it mysteriously to Miss Fourmantelle, talking to her of his hope that 'she would one day share in my great good fortune. *My fortunes will certainly be made*; but more of this when we meet.' There is here a tone of secret exultation, a secret confidence that his promotion was made secure; and with some discretion—in this age, too, when those who had the appointment of ecclesiastical offices were not too nice in their selection—it is likely enough that Yorick would have been a dignitary. But that 'lack of ballast,' and the riot of London pleasures, were betraying him into what were, indeed, 'follies of the head, not of the heart,' but still no less fatal to his advancement. Already were his indiscretions becoming the talk of the town, and his name and books were being spoken of in the public journals with irreverence and disrespect. The reaction was, in fact, setting in; and it must be admitted, he laid himself open to such remarks with a reckless perversion.

He was to be seen constantly at Rane-

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lagh Gardens—a place, it need not be said, which the presence of a clergyman scarcely suited. And though its charms might give ‘an expansion and gay sensation’ to the mind of Doctor Johnson, which he never before experienced, such ‘expansions’ would be eminently perilous to the weaker moral sense of so flighty an ecclesiastic. To the Soho entertainments of the questionable Mrs Cornely’s, he repaired later. He was to be seen at Drury Lane, where Garrick had given him a box, and there the fashionable amateur, Mr Cradock, was in the habit of meeting him behind the scenes. He knew the actors, and was on intimate terms with the actresses, perhaps with Kitty Clive, who acted with such sprightliness, and spelt so ill. For, some time after, she wrote one of her pert complaints to Mr Garrick, concerning the stoppage of her salary, saying, that ‘your dislike to me is extraordinary as the reason you gave Mr Sterne for it;’—a reason which Mr Sterne must have imparted to Mrs Clive. This braving of the world was almost too bold; and the town—at that time case-hardened enough, and more relaxed in its moral tone than ever it was at any time

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since Charles the Second's day—affected to be scandalised. We do not apologise for Sterne, but it is impossible not to consider those by whom the cry was raised; for the abandoned Sandwich was, about this time, the effete guardian of morals in the House, Warburton was the meek apostle of tolerance, and Wilkes the accredited guardian of liberty.

He made no pretence of playing the Pharisee, or keeping his movements secret, even from the Yorkshire gossips. 'I saw Mr Cholmondeley to-night at Ranelagh,' he wrote down to his friend Croft, in a letter full of news. As Miss Fourmantelle was starting for London, he acknowledges the receipt of a letter of hers, 'which gave me much pleasure with some pain,' just as he was going off to Ranelagh.

As to irregular 'gentlemen of the gown,' the town must have been tired of such scandals. There never was such licence among the shepherds of the flock; or such toleration in the flock for the shepherds. The example of the laity acted directly on the clergy, and that of the clergy reacted upon the laity. This joint influence bore with it an

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accumulating scandal. There were parsons, like the Rev. Horne Tooke, who flaunted abroad in gold lace and sky-blue and scarlet, and who apologised to Wilkes for having suffered 'the infectious hand of a bishop to be waved over him—whose imposition, like the sop given to Judas, is only a signal for the devil to enter.' There were Duelling Parsons, like the Rev. Mr Bate, chaplain to a cavalry regiment, who 'went out' and was killed in fair duel; 'a most promising young man,' said the papers with commiseration. There were the clergymen known pleasantly as 'The Three Fighting Parsons'—Henley, Bate, and Churchill; and 'Bruising' clergymen—like the one mentioned in Mr Grose's *Olio*. And a few years later the story of the unfortunate Dodd was to be in everyone's mouth; as well as that of the infatuated Hackman. Mr Thackeray here found a subject for his most vigorous handling; and some pages in the *Four Georges* are devoted to a bitter sketch of the clerical manners of that day. It is a tremendous picture. On such an ecclesiastical background Sterne's follies cannot stand out in very strong relief. His must be a well-

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trained, steady spirit who can resist the prevailing demoralisation of a whole profession, or, at least, not catch the low tone of his order. Not that we may accept a taste for moral reading and wholesome sentiment as a test of moral conduct and virtuous life; as this is well known to be a curious inconsistency in human character,* and seems to be the answer to the argument, which has been pressed, perhaps a little too far; namely, as to this age so heartily relishing the soft beauties of Goldsmith, and the amiable virtues of the Pastor of Wakefield. The same age, it is said, that produced *Tristram*, brought forth also *The Deserted Village*, and that perfect and entire chrysolite of romance—‘the story which we read both in youth and in age, and bless for so well reconciling us to human nature.’ But there are other merits in Goldsmith’s *Vicar* beside its sweet and pure tone, and a charm beyond that of mere pastoral innocence—there is a surpassing delicacy of touch, simplicity, warm geniality,

* Just as at the obscure places of entertainment known as ‘penny gaffs,’ where the audience is the worst and most suspicious class of human beings, the finest ‘sentiments’ are welcomed vociferously.

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marvellous Dutch painting, and perfect faith and truth—qualities which every age, however corrupted, will, more or less, appreciate. And how, after all, was this exquisite little pastoral welcomed? As Mr Forster says, it only ‘silently forced its way. . . The *St James’ Chronicle* did not condescend to notice its appearance, and the *Monthly Review* confessed frankly that nothing was to be made of it.’ No doubt it eventually gained ground and passed through many editions before its author’s death.

Gross as Sterne was, he should not be judged too harshly. It was difficult for a careless, unsteady mind, such as his was—unaffected, too, by the least tinge of Puritanism—not to catch the free, *débonnaire* tone which he saw everywhere. This, so far, has reference to the manners of the time, and, as has been insisted on, is ground for indulgence in dealing with Mr Sterne’s levities.

The truth is, a coarseness of speech and writing had long disfigured the conversation and practice of the men and women of the age, and readers of Fielding and Smollett will have discovered that a certain forcible

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indelicacy of phrase and allusion had become almost habitual. It will be found from allusions in the public papers and magazines that girls were allowed to carry *Tristram* about in their pockets; and Mr Forster, in a curious chapter, has shown us how the pious Dr Doddridge did not scruple to read over the *Wife of Bath*, to young Miss Moore, and could laugh heartily at its humour. Johnson went so far as to say that the same author was a 'lady's book,' and Goldsmith, always on the side of morals and virtue, innocently included two gross pieces by the same hand in a sort of 'Speaker' which he compiled for a bookseller.

Meanwhile, the York heroine, Miss Fourmantelle, had not yet arrived in town. She had written to Mr Sterne to use his influence for some local matter, which would appear to have failed. It is scarcely a refinement to say that an almost perceptible change of tone can be discovered in his answer. The whirl of festivity, the universal adulation, or possibly some other 'Dulcinea,' whose presence in Mr Sterne's head was a perpetual necessity, had done its work. 'Never, my dear girl, be dejected; something

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else will offer and turn out in another quarter. 'Thou mayst be assured, nothing in this world shall be wanting that I can *do with discretion*.' He then assured her that she will ever 'find him the same man of honour and truth.'

But in a few days 'dear, dear Kitty' arrived, and took up her residence at Mead's Court, St Anne, Soho, and her presence there, it is to be feared, was rather a little drag and hindrance upon the clergyman's lively motions. He saw her of one Sunday afternoon; then, about the middle of the week, writes a hurried line saying he could not spare an hour or half an hour 'if it would have saved my life,' and that 'every minute of this day and to-morrow is so pre-engaged that I am as much a prisoner as if I was in gaol.' He then lays out a possible meeting for Friday. Sunday until Friday! But a few weeks before he would 'have given a guinea for a squeeze' of her hand and was momentarily engaged in 'sending out my soul' to see what she was about, and wishing he could send his body with it. She was consoled with this comforting speech:—'I beg, dear girl, you will believe

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I do not spend an hour where I wish, for I wish to be with you always: but fate orders my steps, God knows how, for the present. —Adieu! Adieu!’

This is our last glimpse of ‘dear, dear Kitty.’ The car of Mr Sterne swept by her. She drops out of view at this point. She was second in order of Mr Sterne’s violent attachments. Poor ‘dear, dear Kitty!’

Warburton, meanwhile, held to him firmly, nor was he likely to be daunted by public cries. Perhaps the opposition of the crowd roused his controversial spirit. He even went round the bench of bishops, and recommended the book heartily to their notice; what was more extraordinary, he recommended the author also, telling them ‘he was the English Rabelais.’ To be introduced in such a character would seem an odd proceeding, unless, indeed, as Horace Walpole wickedly insinuates, ‘they had never heard of such a writer!’ Again, it must be repeated, such encouragement does, indeed, take much of the blame from off the delinquent’s shoulders, and looks very like an invitation to proceed with further instalments of his book.

There are some little trifles which show the

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strength of his popularity. There was a new game of cards called Tristram Shandy introduced, in which 'the knave of hearts, if hearts are trumps, is supreme, and nothing can resist his power.' For epicures there was a new salad invented, and christened the 'Shandy Salad.' And, later on, at the Irish steeple-chases, we find horses entered bearing the name of 'Tristram Shandy.'* These are but straws on the current; but they show how strong the current was. Gray wrote that 'one is invited to dinner where he dines, a fortnight beforehand,' so that there was actually a double competition for the new lion; first, to secure his presence *at* a dinner, which was difficult when he himself was engaged fourteen deep; and then to be invited to the house where he was engaged to dine. To sustain this popularity and hold his own among the wits, he must have had special gifts of liveliness and good conversation. There can be no question but that he imported a good deal of Shandyism into his conversation, which he afterwards almost matured into a system, so as to astound the French *noblesse*, and make them inquire—

* [There was also a dancing tune called "Tristram Shandy."]

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but not in such doubtful French as '*Qui le diable est ce Chevalier Shandy?*' When in special vein he would phrase it, 'I Shandy it now more than ever.'

That his London conversation took the shape of a pleasant tone of burlesque and grotesque exaggeration, always amusing if skilfully handled, seems likely from a sort of photograph of one of these dinners which has been preserved. He was dining at a fashionable house, where a certain self-sufficient physician chanced to be of the party, and engrossed the whole conversation, giving it a medical turn, and discoursing profoundly of 'phrenitis,' and 'paraphrenitis,' to the annoyance of host and company. Mr Yorick, seeing the turn matters were taking, at once struck in, as it were, in the same key, and began to give an account of a recent malady from which he had suffered acutely. It was a cold, he said, which he had caught originally by *leaning on* a damp cushion—the various stages and aggravations of which he proceeded to detail gravely, and with a happy parodying of the cant terms the professional gentleman had been dealing. He related how 'after sneezing and snivel-

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ling a fortnight, it fell upon my breast. How they blooded and blistered me!’ But, somehow, he grew steadily worse, for ‘I was *treated according to the exact rules of the college*. In short, it came eventually to an *adhesion*, and all was over with me.’ In this desperate case an ingenious idea suggested itself. ‘I bought a pole,’ continued Yorick, with due gravity, ‘and began leaping over the country.’ Whenever he came to a ditch, he, by long practice, contrived to fall exactly *across the ridge of it upon the side* opposite to the adhesion. ‘*This tore it off*’ at once. Now I am as you see. Come, let us fill to the success of this system.’ Thus pleasantly was extinguished the intrusive physician.

This story went round the clubs, and got into the papers. The host was given out to be ‘the amiable Charles Stanhope,’ and the physician, Dr Mounsey, and with these names it fluttered down to York. But this was a mistake, rather an invention of the notorious Dr Hill—‘Bardana’ Hill—who was the first to set the story afloat in his *Inspector*.*

* [Consult “The First Biography of Sterne” and Letter XLIII.]

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He had a grudge against Mounsey, whom he at once cast for the part of the pedant.

There was at this time a very gay prince of the royal family, Prince Edward, afterwards Duke of York. He delighted in balls, supper-parties, and music, and was to die in a few years in a foreign country, of over-dancing at a ball. In London he would get the nobility to give supper-parties, at which he would stay until three in the morning. To this royal votary of amusement was Mr Sterne now presented. Though comparatively a cheap distinction in London, it was of importance enough to be written down into Yorkshire. Mr Sterne saw him at private concerts, where the prince performed publicly on 'the bass viol.' This, it will be recollected, was also an accomplishment of the clergyman. With his usual good fortune, Mr Sterne made an impression, and 'received great notice' from him. He was even invited to sup with him. He must have known Foote at this time, whom he was to meet again later at Paris, for he knew Foote's friend, the odd Dr Kennedy, who frequented playhouses, professionally as it were, and had himself fetched out by hurried lacqueys, just as

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Mr Sawyer had himself called out of church. In short, this London campaign was one of the most brilliant ever fought by a successful man of letters.

Some little trouble of a provoking sort was he now to know. There was at this time in London a certain notorious Dr Hill—a strange and versatile quack, whose name, eyes that glanced over the *London Chronicle* or *Evening Post* were sure to light on in a corner. The ‘Elixir of Bardana,’ and the ‘Essence of Water-dock, in bottles, 8s. each, sealed and signed by the author,’ had made his name quite as famous as that of more modern advertising charlatans. He had also rushed into print; had interchanged epigrams with Garrick; and had a savage wrangle with the Royal Society. He added to the ranks of the magazines, whose name was already legion; and directed the *Inspector* and *Royal Female Magazine*. ‘For dulness,’ said Warburton, bitterly, in allusion to this last, ‘who often has as great a hand as the devil in deforming God’s works of the creation, has made *them*, it seems, *male* and *female*.’ And in the *Royal Female Magazine* for May the first, appeared a strange paper—a photograph

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of the fashionable clergyman—outrageously personal, and laughably flattering, a curious yarn of truth and falsehood commingled. It was copied into the *London Chronicle* and the *London Magazine*, and tuned in this key. ‘The subject,’ it began, was both ‘a favourite and fashionable one. Yorick is a gentleman, a clergyman, and a man of learning—singular in the highest degree, for he has an infinite share of wit and goodness.’ He is stated to be ‘a native of the field of war, and to add to the whimsicality, born in the barracks of Dublin.’ When his book made its appearance, he disdained to practise any of ‘those common arts’ by which ‘a book is pushed. A parcel is merely sent up from the country;’ and it was ‘scarce advertised.’ ‘They have made their author’s way *to the tables of the first people in the kingdom*, and to the friendship of Mr Garrick. Fools,’ it goes on to say, ‘tremble at the allusions that may be made from the present volumes. Forty people have assumed to themselves the ridiculous titles in these volumes.’

It then dwells on the ‘extreme candour and modesty of his temper.’ ‘A vain man

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would be exalted at these attentions. He sees them in another light.' It then gives a couple of Yorick's remarks, which were then going round; how Mr Sterne used to say, pleasantly, that 'he was like a fashionable mistress, whom everybody courted because he happened to be the fashion. And again, this 'singular creature' said to a friend who paid him a compliment on his great benevolence,—'I am an odd fellow, and if you hear any good of me, doctor, don't believe it.'

More serious, however, was a fresh statement of that vulgar rumour, which had been to Mr Sterne 'for all the world like a cut across my finger with a sharp penknife, but which, in its present broader shape, must have affected his sensibility far more acutely. *'And it is scarce to be credited whose liberal purse has bought off the dread of a tutor's character in those (volumes) which are to come.'* This was the old club story revived.

It has been mentioned how triumphantly he wrote to 'dear Kitty,' that 'I had a purse of guineas given me yesterday by a bishop,' when he had been only two or

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three weeks in town. So odd and exceptional a present, and coming from so sensitive a being as the new Bishop of Gloucester, would in itself be quite sufficient to cause such a rumour.

The whole town seems to have had the story. Walpole wrote of 'the purse of gold' to Florence; it was alluded to in newspaper paragraphs. The quack doctor's magazine travelled down to York, was read there greedily, and very speedily a good-natured report was going round their little *coteries*, that Mr Sterne himself had written or inspired the whole. This was quite characteristic. What specially affected them was a paragraph relating to a piece of local generosity on the part of the Vicar of Sutton—ushered in by some outrageous compliments. 'Everybody is eager to see the author, and when they see him, everybody loves the man. When Lord Falconberg gave him the new benefice he found that his predecessor had left behind him a wife and family in great distress. The generous Yorick presented her with £100 in hand, and promised a pension for her life.'

His friends, the Crofts, watchful in his

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absence, wrote to him of the rumour, and of how the Yorkshire Mrs Candours were circulating that he had furnished all the details of that complacent sketch. He wrote back an indignant denial almost the instant he received it. No wonder he should marvel at the uncharitableness of the York people, who could 'suppose any man so gross a beast as to pen such a character of himself.' Such a tissue of wild stories only 'shows the absurdity of York credulity and nonsense.' The best refutation, however, was in the blunders and mistakes—'falsehoods' he calls them—in reference to that 'whimsicality' of his birth 'in the barracks of Dublin,' which event, as we have seen, occurred at Clonmel; and more particularly in reference to that showy act of generosity, the 'hundred pounds' and pension to the widow of his predecessor—a charity quite beyond the measure of Yorick's purse.

He takes up the story of the purse of gold, and says, that 'in this great town no one ever suspected it, for a thousand reasons,' and refutes it by three arguments: the improbability of his 'falling foul of Dr Warburton, my best friend,' by representing

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him so weak a man, or for 'telling such a lie of him as his giving me a purse to buy off his tutorship for *Tristram*;' or lastly '*that I should be fool enough to own I had taken his purse for such a purpose.*'* The last was, perhaps, the weightiest argument of the three. Yet it seems a suspicious, or, at least, a mysterious transaction. And we have his own assurance to Kitty that a purse of guineas had been given him by a Bishop.

The reviewers had now begun to deal with the book. The Critical Reviewers recommended it to the public 'as a work of humour and ingenuity.' The Monthly Reviewers do not appear to have dealt with it at all,† and the *London Chronicle*, and other journals, noticed it with a disfavour or commendation, pretty impartially divided. It was not until much later that they opened on him without mercy, and turned all such fiercer sarcasm as their force could supply

* Most writers—even Mr Watson, in his *Life of Bishop Warburton*—have assumed that there is here a complete denial of the purse story; but Sterne merely denies the supposed motive for accepting the purse.

† [The *Monthly Review* was the first to notice the book. See the issue for December, 1759.]

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upon the succeeding issues of *Shandy*. One of these hostile reviews was conducted by a certain doctor, who wrote novels, whom he christened Smelfungus. The sharpest shaft of all, because the wittiest, was to flutter out of the obscurity of Green Arbour Court; and the *Citizen of the World*, in the *Public Ledger*, was to enter his protest against this prodigious popularity. When this pleasantry was slyly directed against the mere tricks and eccentricities of Mr Sterne's manner, it was well founded; but such a lack of appreciation of his genuine gifts, his pathos, and his humour, of his gallery of original men and women, seems incomprehensible in one of Goldsmith's nature. The judgment passed some years later upon Sterne's social merit—'and a very dull fellow'—would seem to have been his settled opinion of his literary gifts also. 'The humour and wit,' says Mr Forster, 'ought surely to have been admitted; and if the wisdom, and charity of my Uncle Toby, a Mr Shandy, or a Corporal Trim, might anywhere have claimed frank and immediate recognition, it should have been in that series of essays which Beau Tibbs and the Man in Black have helped to make immortal.'

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‘ “ Bless me,” says the Bookseller—in this light airy bit of trifling—to the Chinese traveller, “now you speak of an epic poem, you shall see an excellent farce. Here it is. Dip into it where you will, it will be found replete with true modern humour. Strokes, sir; it is filled with strokes of wit and satire in every line.” “*Do you call these dashes of the pen, strokes?*” replied I; “*for I must confess I see no other.*” “And pray, sir,” returned he, “what do you call them? . . . Sir, a well-placed dash makes half the wit of our writers of modern humour. I bought last season a piece that had no other merit upon earth than nine hundred and ninety-five breaks, seventy-two ha-ha’s, and three good things.” ’ This was excellent fooling. But in a week or two the Chinese citizen comes back to the subject, and strikes heavily, and in all seriousness, at the Rev. Mr Sterne. It is almost the only instance in the gay and good-humoured letters where he seems to grow warm and heated in his onslaught. He inveighs with justice against the freedoms and improprieties which disfigured *Tristram*, but for which it was scarcely fair to pillory Mr Sterne singly; for it is

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admitted that 'this manner of writing is perfectly adapted to the taste of gentlemen and ladies of fashion here.' He remarks how 'very difficult it is for a dunce to obtain the reputation of a wit;' yet, 'by the assistance of this freedom, this may be easily effected, and a licentious blockhead often passes for a fellow of smart parts and pretensions; every object in nature helps the jokes forward, without scarce any effort of the imagination.' A severe but just criticism, and admirably hitting off the secret of the worst portions of *Tristram*.

With more severity still he dwells on the toleration with which *Tristram* was received by the female portion of the community. He wonders at their so 'bravely throwing off their prejudices;' and not only 'applauding,' but, what was far more serious, actually introducing this free tone into their conversation. 'Yet so it is, the pretty innocents now carry those books openly in their hands which formerly were laid under the cushion.' They are even heard 'to lisp their double meanings with grace.' If this was indeed the tone of society, it is scarcely to be

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believed that Mr Sterne's book was wholly accountable for it.

Goldsmith was at this time smarting under a neglect but little creditable to the age. His bitterness is scarcely surprising; and had the words that follow appeared in a more influential organ than the *Public Ledger*, they would have caused Mr Sterne much annoyance and vexation. 'However,' Goldsmith goes on: 'Though this figure is so much in fashion, though professors of it are so much caressed by the great, *those perfect judges of literary excellence*; yet, it is confessed to be only a revival of what was once fashionable here before.' He alludes to 'the gentle Tom Durfey, whose works were once the subject of polite—I mean very polite—conversation.' 'There are several very dull fellows, who, by a few mechanical helps, sometimes learn to become extremely brilliant and pleasing. . . . By imitating a cat, or a sow and pigs; by a loud laugh and a slap on the shoulder, *the most ignorant are furnished out* for conversation. But, as the writer finds it impossible to throw his winks, his shrugs, or his attitudes upon paper, he may borrow some assistance,

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indeed, by printing his face at the title-page.' He then falls into a happy burlesque of Mr Sterne's manner:—'The reader must be treated with the most perfect familiarity; in one page the author is to make them a low bow, and in the next *to pull them by the nose.* . . . He must speak of himself, and his chapters, and his manner, and what he would be at, and his own importance, *and his mother's importance*, with the most unpitying prolixity, now and then testifying his contempt for all but himself—smiling, without a jest; and without wit, possessing vivacity.'

It was not often gentle 'Goldy' grew so warm, or, it must be said, so indiscriminating. Was it that, besides his own indifferent opinion of the book, he suspected its reputation had been made by that cheap process by which he believed reputations were at that time manufactured in England? 'A great man says at his table that such a book *is no bad thing.* Immediately this praise is carried off by five flatterers, to be dispersed at twelve coffee-houses, from whence it circulates, improving as it proceeds, through fifty-five houses, where

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cheaper liquors are sold; from thence it is carried away by the honest tradesman to his own fireside.'

In Dublin, the new book enjoyed a vast popularity. It was at once reprinted by that notable publishing privateer, George Faulkner, who praised it up extravagantly. Mrs Sandford was turning over the books one day in his shop, and was near buying it, and bringing it down to Mrs Delany at Delville. 'We were on the brink of having it read among us,' says that pleasant lady, with a devout horror. 'D. D.' was 'not a little offended' with the author, but still, the report of the Delville *coterie* on the Irish run of the book is, that, 'it seems to divert more than it offends;' which is quite characteristic of the country. In Dublin there were actually cheap copies, on inferior paper, selling at sixpence—to the great injury of the regular pirates, who were aggrieved by this invasion of their *quasi* copyright, and protested loudly.

The Florentine legation, kept *au courant* with all that was new or fashionable in London life by regular advices from Arlington Street, learnt that in the next case of

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books there was to be 'a fashionable thing, called *Tristram Shandy*.' But the real opinion of the witty letter-writer was sent to Sir D. Dalrymple, who, at Edinburgh, was almost as removed from town talk as Sir Horace Mann was at Florence. 'At present,' he writes, on the 4th of April, 'nothing is talked of, nothing admired, but what I cannot help calling *a very insipid and tedious performance*; whose *chief* merit,' he says, consists in 'going backwards.' It made him smile 'two or three times at the beginning,' but, by way of compensation, 'makes one yawn for two hours.' The characters are '*tolerably* well kept up,' but the 'wit is for ever *attempted and missed*.'



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11-11-11

CHAPTER XIII

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ALL this time, while being feasted and *fêted*, and 'hurried off his legs by going to great people,' he had contrived to snatch a few moments for serious business. A new edition of *Tristram* was being sent through the press—no very heavy labour, certainly—and on an April morning the readers of the *Public Advertiser* saw under their eyes that—

'THIS DAY is published, dedicated to the Right Hon. Mr Pitt, with a Frontispiece by Hogarth, in two volumes, price 5s., sewed, THE SECOND EDITION of *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman*.

'Speedily will be published the SERMONS of Mr Yorick.'

The new *Tristram* edition had thus two additional attractions—the dedication to Mr

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Pitt, and the plate by Hogarth. The book, indeed, had already a buffooning sort of dedication, addressed to no one specially; but that was written at York. Up in London it was different; the successful author, the rising cleric, the friend of statesmen, and *protégé* of bishops, would be ill advised to neglect this mode of increasing his social capital. Wise in his generation, as he fancied, he selected for his dedicatee the great patriot minister—and he one day writes from Mr Dodsley's shop the following note, which the great commoner thought worthy of being put by among his papers—at least had not doomed to immediate destruction:—

‘ Friday,
‘ Mr Dodsley's,
‘ Pall Mall.’

(Publisher and author, it has been seen, were but a few doors from each other.)

‘ SIR,—Though I have no suspicion that the enclosed dedication can offend you, yet I thought it my duty to take some method of letting you see it, before I presumed to beg the honour of presenting it to you next

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week with the *Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy*.

‘I am, sir,

‘Your most humble servant,

‘LAW. STERNE.’

The dedication itself was conceived in a warm, admiring strain. He told the minister that the book ‘was written in a by-corner of the kingdom and in a retired, thatched house, where I live in a constant endeavour to fence against the infirmities of ill-health and other evils of life by mirth.’

This second edition barely stayed the public appetite, for it was exhausted in little more than three weeks. Four editions were issued before the year was out.

To engage Hogarth's aid for the illustrations he wrote to Mr Berrenger, the Master of the Horse, Garrick's friend, this extraordinary reckless appeal:—

‘You bid me tell you all my wants. What the Devil in Hell can a fellow want now? By the Father of the Sciences (you know his name) I would give both my ears (if I was not to lose my credit by it) for

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no more than ten strokes of Howgarth's witty chisel, to clap at the Front of my next Edition of *Shandy*. The Vanity of a Pretty Girl in the Heyday of her Roses & Lilies is a fool to that of Author of my stamp. Oft did Swift sigh to Pope in these words: 'Orna me, unite something of yours to mine, to transmit us down together hand in hand to futurity.' The loosest sketch in Nature, of Trim's reading the sermon to my Father, &c., wd do the Business, and it wd mutually illustrate his System and mine. But, my dear Shandy, with what face I would hold out my lank Purse! I would shut my Eyes, & you should put in your hand and take out what you liked for it. Ignoramus! Fool! Block-head! Symoniack! This Grace is not to be bought with money. Perish thee and thy Gold with thee! What shall we do? I have the worst face in the world to ask a favour with, & besides, I would not propose a disagreeable thing to one I so much admire for the whole world; but you can say anything—you are an impudent, honest Dog, & can't set a face upon a bad matter; prithee sally out to Leicester fields, & when you have knock'd at the door (for you must

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knock first) and art got in, begin thus: "Mr Hogarth, I have been with my friend Shandy this morning;" but go on yr own way, as I shall do mine. I esteem you, & am, my dear Mentor, Yrs most Shandascally,

' L. STERNE.'

The application was successful, and the new Shandys* were adorned with a couple of spirited plates by the painter.†

For the new edition of the volumes of sermons which were now to be published, it was reported that he received £650. It was so written by Walpole to his friends. This, however, is a mistake. The original agreement, dated May 19th, sold many years ago, with other papers of Dodsley's, set out that for the new editions of *Tristram*, and the two volumes of sermons, he was to receive £480; a sum, considering they were mere pocket volumes, widely printed, with dashes, breaks, and other typographical

* 'Shandy' is said to be a Yorkshire local word signifying 'crack-brained,' 'odd,' etc.

† [Hogarth furnished one plate—the frontispiece, 'Trim Reading the Sermon.' A second plate, 'The Moment my Father cried Pish!' first appeared as frontispiece to Volume III., in January, 1761.]

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spasms, was handsome enough. To Garrick he appears to have been indebted for this arrangement, who all through seems to have proved a fast, active, and useful friend. Not too exaggerated was that public apostrophe with which he addressed him a few months later:—‘My dear friend Garrick, whom I have so much cause to esteem and honour (why or wherefore ’tis no matter).’

May came round, and in the second week of that month was the splendid installation at Windsor, when Prince Ferdinand, and the Marquis of Rockingham, a Yorkshire nobleman, were to receive the Garter. The ceremony took place on Tuesday the 6th, and on the Monday they set out, the latter nobleman with a ‘grand retinue.’ Mr Sterne was part of his ‘suit,’ perhaps in the capacity of chaplain.

The *Sermons* were now being eagerly looked for. For the sermon which Corporal Trim had read and commented on so admirably, and had been preached before the ‘judges of assize,’ had struck the public fancy. ‘The best thing in it,’ wrote Walpole, ‘is a sermon;’ and there was a large class of the ‘serious’ who bought the ‘hun-

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dred very wise, learned, well-intended productions, that have no charms for me,' as Goldsmith put it. Dodsley was not one to let so good an opening pass by, and a selection from Mr Sterne's *Village Sermons* was at press with the second edition of *Tristram*. On Thursday, the 22d of May, there was in the *Public Advertiser* this singular notice: 'THIS DAY is published, in two volumes, price, sewed, 5s. (with a portrait of the *Editor*, engraved from a painting by Mr Reynolds), *The Sermons of Mr Yorick*, published by the Rev. Mr Sterne, Prebendary of York. Printed for J. Dodsley.' It will be remarked, what a Shandean jumble is here of Yorick and Sterne; and some have leant on him very severely for what they considered a trick unworthy his position as a clergyman. They were not introduced under the authorship of Tristram Shandy, but of Mr Yorick, an amiable clergyman, with whose sufferings and pathetic end all were familiar. The fact was, Mr Sterne was better known as 'Mr Yorick,' than as Mr Sterne, and it was really a pardonable device which deceived nobody. In a characteristic preface he remonstrates with

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his public. He hopes 'the most serious reader will find nothing to offend him'—in putting this new title to his newer work. 'Lest it should be otherwise, I have added a second title-page with the real name of the author. The first will serve the bookseller's purpose, and the second will ease the minds of those who see a jest, and the danger which lurks under it where no jest was meant;' and accordingly in the volume is to be found a separate fly-leaf, for the benefit of such tender consciences as were liable to be pricked. Then, pleasantly taking credit for their being hastily written, and carrying the marks of haste with them, as evidence of their coming 'more from the heart than the head,' he prays to God it may do the world the service he wishes, and winds up with a declaration that he rests 'with a heart much at ease upon the protection of the humane and candid, from whom I have received many favours, for which I beg leave to return them thanks—thanks.' 'The man's head,' said Walpole, in one of his charitable humours, 'indeed was a little turned before, but is now topsyturvy with his success and fame.' But this

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Sermon Preface could scarcely have come from a topsy-turvy head. Lady Cowper's testimony may be accepted as a specimen of the average public opinion. 'Pray read Yorick's *Sermons*,' wrote that lady to her friend Mrs Delany, 'though you would not read *Tristram Shandy*; I like them exceedingly, and I think he must be a good man.'

Very droll was the equivoque which Mr Sterne related long after in his *Journey*, in reference to this very title. Who was the bishop—one of the first of our own Church, for whose 'candour and paternal sentiments I have the highest veneration'—who said 'he could not bear to look into sermons wrote by the King of Denmark's jester?' 'Good, my lord,' said Mr Sterne, 'there are *two* Yoricks. The Yorick your Lordship thinks of has been dead and buried eight hundred years ago—he flourished in Horwendillus' Court. The other Yorick is myself, *who have flourished, my Lord, in no Court*. He shook his head. "Good God!" said I, "you might as well compare Alexander the Great with Alexander the copper-smith, my lord." "It was all one," he replied.

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Mr Sterne thought 'that if Alexander of Macedon could have translated his lordship, the Bishop would not have said so.' This is a specimen of his best sketching. We almost hear and see the Prelate shaking his head and repeating, '*It was all one.*'

The *Sermons* were introduced in the prettiest garb. 'Have you read his *Sermons*,' writes Gray, 'with his own comic figure at the head of them?' Scarcely 'comic,' but showing a store of thought and originality, much latent humour, and a profound Rabelais twinkle.* The poet was charmed with them. He thought they were 'in the style most proper for the pulpit, and show a strong imagination and a sensible heart.' Dr Johnson, who could not relish 'the man Sterne,' was not likely to give a good word to his sermons. Mr Craddock tells us how a lady asked the Doctor how he liked Yorick's *Sermons*. In his rough, blunt way, he answered her,—

* Though the publication was spread over some eight years, there was a uniformity observed in the shape of Mr Sterne's books seldom met with in other directions. A complete set of the original editions is rarely to be found, and for the *bouquinant* makes a very pretty find.

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‘I know nothing about them, madam!’ * Later on, the subject was renewed, perhaps started by one whom he might have considered to be more competent to deal with them, and he then censured them with much severity. The lady, who had not forgotten his plain reply, sharply retorted,—‘I understood, sir, you had not read them.’ ‘No, madam,’ roared the sage, ‘I *did* read them, but it was in a stage-coach; I should not even have deigned to have looked at them *had I been at large!*’ This onslaught was due to the great critic’s temper of mind, for there were many other works of inferior quality which he deigned to look at—even enjoy. He was delighted with Blair’s correct but feeble sermons. To another lady, the ‘vivacious’ Miss Monckton, he was scarcely less civil, when the same topic was started. She was urging that some of Sterne’s writings were very pathetic, a modified shape of approbation which could scarcely be disputed. Again Johnson broke out, and denied it. ‘I am sure,’ she said, ‘they have affected me.’ This left so happy an opening for a good

* [Consult ‘Sterne and the Theatre’ in *Letters and Miscellanies*.]

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retort that the huge sage began to smile and roll himself about before speaking. 'Why, that is because, dearest, you are a dunce;' which unparliamentary stroke he afterwards handsomely withdrew, saying, 'with equal truth and politeness,' 'Madam, if I had thought so, I certainly should not have said it.' Posterity has happily reversed many of these rough-and-ready verdicts.

The moralist someway never forgave 'the man Sterne.' In his own city of Lichfield, the old animosity to the *Sermons* turned up again. One 'Mr Wickens,' whose books he was turning over, showed him the obnoxious discourses. The sight of it was like a piece of scarlet cloth. 'Sir,' roared the Doctor, 'do you ever read any others?' 'Yes,' answered Mr Wickens, with a little spiritual vanity; 'I read Sherlock, and Tillotson, and Beveridge, and others.' 'Ay, sir,' broke out the other, in a rather imperfect metaphor, '*there* you drink the cup of salvation to the bottom; here you have merely the froth from the surface.' But still he could appreciate him: and he told a friend of Sterne's long after, that it required all his powers to neutralise the effects of the humourist's fascinat-

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ing powers of conversation, upon their common friends, Garrick and Reynolds.

The correct but prolix author of *Clarissa* was much scandalised by the new book. 'You cannot imagine,' he wrote, 'I have looked into these books. *Execrable I cannot but call them.*' And then adds, what reads very comically for those who shrink back from the weary and protracted incidents of the excellent Sir Charles Grandison's life, 'that he has had only patience' to 'run through' a portion of the book. In that same letter he takes the trouble of copying out the sentiments of a young lady who has been shocked by the persual of *Tristram*, and who ventures on a remarkable literary prediction. 'But mark my prophecy,' said she, impressively, 'that by another season it will be *as much decried as it is now extolled.* It has not sufficient merit to prevent its sinking when no longer upheld by the breath of fashion.' There is a pendant for this forecasting in Dr Farmer's prophecy, who, a little later, requested his friend, 'B. N. Turner,' to mark his (Dr Farmer's) words, and remember that he had predicted, that 'in twenty years, the man who wished to

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refer to *Tristram Shandy* would have to ask for it of an antiquary.' The person reporting this in the year 1818, adds, with complacent dulness, — '*This was truly prophetic!*'

At length this London carnival was to close, and after his three months' revel, Tristram must return to rustic life again, and go back to Yorkshire.

On Sunday, the eighteenth of May, he had the honour of preaching before the judges—the second time of his performing that function. He had already bought a pair of horses for the journey; and in less than a week after the appearance of his *Sermons*, was on his road home. A very different man, it is to be feared. It must have been a well-ballasted mind that could have stood such a probation. Such was scarcely Yorick's. The pettings of the great, the fellowship of fashionable men, the flatteries of the crowd, must have worked mischief; worse than all, he took home with him the approbation of his spiritual superiors. Happy for him if Garrick's remark had been only in part true:—'*He degenerated in London,*' said the actor, wit-

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tilly, 'like an ill-transplanted shrub; the incense of the great spoiled his head, as their *ragouts* had done his stomach.'

The sad feature of the whole was that he found himself compelled to cater, as it were, for the grosser taste of the public. *Tristram Shandy* may be said to have two spells of reputation. One, during its first publication—the second in the estimation of posterity. There can be little doubt that its success with the readers of Sterne's day was owing to the novelty of its coarse suggestions, even to its broad and low expressions. Remarkable, too, is the far-fetched, laboured fashion in which such topics are sought and introduced. There are many pages filled with what is sheer nonsense, probably meant to fill up the pages somehow and anyhow. Further, the great characters had been merely introduced, and not elaborated, as they were to be later. We may conclude, therefore, that it was the piquant grossness that 'fetched' the town.

But there was, as I said, a second and fixed period of fame for him and his book, founded on the humours of the four or five leading characters—my Uncle Toby, Mr and

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Mrs Shandy, Trim and Dr Slop—these outlines have become fixed in the public mind, like the incidents and characters in *Don Quixote*. These are so clear in their drawing, and have been so much referred to and quoted, that they have become known and familiar, even for those who have never seen or read the book. The coarseness of *Tristram* is now little cared for, and taken as a book, on the whole is thought but heavy reading by 'the general.'

Coxwould, the new curacy, was on the Thirsk high road, and about sixteen miles from York city; Stillington, his other charge, lay within six miles' ride, and Sutton was about four miles beyond Stillington. On the whole, the 'cure' of all three would not seem to have been a very laborious duty, especially as the 'souls' were not very abundant. Still he found it necessary to subsidise a curate for Sutton and Stillington, and confine himself wholly to the pastoral charge of Coxwould. 'A sweet retirement in comparison with Sutton,' he called it, not very long before his death, when reviewing the scenes of his many wanderings. Red tiles and red brick fur-

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nished a warm air of colouring to the place; and it boasted but a single inn, which was the Ferry House, close to the river.

It was a long, low house, which was fitted at each end with two quaint heavy gables, and which rambled away round the corner into a great, tall brick shoulder and high, pyramidal chimney, that started from the ground like a buttress, whose function it indeed served, and then finished off behind with a low, sloping roof within a few feet of the ground. When he thought of that cheerful, red-tiled roof, rustic and old-fashioned, yet so suggestive of comfort, of the fringe of ivy which hung over the doorway, and of the diamond-pane windows of the pretty church, which faced his windows from the side of the road of the little village, and of Lord Fauconberg's pleasant park, close by, where he used to drive—no wonder that, at the close of his wild Bohemian career, that picture should come back upon him with a breath of pleasant memories. 'This Shandy Castle of mine,' he began to christen it within a few weeks of his arrival. It soon grew to be 'Shandy Hall;' and by the name of Shandy Hall it is known

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to this day. Behind in the garden was my Uncle Toby's bowling green—where the mimic sieges of Namur and Dendermond were carried on with such unflagging regularity—and the arbour, where the author of Uncle Toby wrote of the summer evenings. Sometimes, when he is very low in spirits, it becomes what he quaintly calls 'a cuckoldy retreat.'

His parishioners, it would seem, were scanty enough: 'Unless for the few sheep left me to take care of,' he wrote later, 'in this wilderness, I might as well, nay better, be at Mecca.' But this might have been one of its *agrémens*. Another was the vicinity of Lord Fauconberg and his park, scarcely a mile away: and to visit that nobleman, he used very often to drive out in a new chaise, drawn by the London horses, while little 'Lyd' cantered along gaily by their side, on a pony purchased for her by her indulgent father. There he found Lord Belasyse, and Lady Anne, to whom his company was always welcome. Naturally enough then he would have enjoyed his new habitation. He had no trouble with Sutton and Stillington; a curate, as I have said—the

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Reverend Mr Walker—took care of those parishes for him.

After his death the house—it was known as Shandy Hall—was suffered to go to ruin. It had passed, with the Old Manor House, to the Wombwell family—one of whom had married Lord Fauconberg's heiress. Sir George Wombwell, the later owner, has put it in thorough repair. Unluckily it has been thought good to divide it into labourers' cottages, but the regular outline of the place is preserved, and on the entrance gate is to be read:—'Here dwelt Laurence Sterne, for many years incumbent of Coxwold. Here he wrote *Tristram Shandy* and the *Sentimental Journey*. Died in London in 1768, aged 55 years.' *

The duties of his stall, now so long suspended, required his presence at York: and for little more than a fortnight after his return, we find him dating letters from that city. His first letter is to his Episcopal patron Warburton, with a present of 'two sets' of his sermons. He did not know the Bishop's address, and therefore 'could think

* Not far away, at Ampleforth, is the St Laurence's Catholic College, which it was jocosely said bore this name in honour of its erratic neighbour.

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of no better expedient than to order them into Mr Berrenger's hands;' then takes the opportunity of making a very earnest and grateful acknowledgment for past favours. 'The truest and humblest thanks I return to your Lordship for the generosity of your protection and advice to me; by making a good use of the one, I will hope to deserve the other. I wish your Lordship all the health and happiness in this world; for I am your Lordship's most obliged and most grateful servant, L. STERNE.'

He adds in a postscript that he is about 'sitting down to go on with *Tristram*, &c. The scribblers use me ill, but they have used my betters much worse, for which may God forgive them.' An adroit reference to the rough treatment his patron and himself experienced from 'the scribblers.'

Warburton and Garrick had been already in consultation over our 'heteroclite Parson.' The Bishop, perhaps, was a little uneasy, lest his indiscreet *protégé* should bring his hastily-bestowed patronage into discredit. Garrick was interested in his friend's welfare and reputation. The donor of the 'Purse of Gold' would naturally be the most suit-

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able person to take up the ungrateful office of monitor; and the actor had sent to Prior Park, by the hands of Mr Berrenger, some 'hints' as to the erratic behaviour of 'our Parson.' The present of the sermons furnished an excellent opening, which the Bishop was not slow to seize.

In a week's time the Bishop replied. It was an admirable letter, written in the full weighty style to which that prelate, when he chose, could adapt himself. A letter, too, skilfully adapted to the strange spirit he was addressing, and which delicately insinuated advice, and even reproof, without the cold air of professional admonishment. 'Reverend sir,' it began, 'I have your favour of the 9th instant, and am glad to understand you are got safe home, and *employed again in your proper studies.*' An odd remark, considering that Mr Sterne had just told him that he 'was just sitting down to go on with *Tristram.*' 'You have it in your power,' he goes on, 'to make that which is an amusement to yourself and others, useful to both; at least *you should, above all things, beware of its becoming hurtful to either by any violations of decency and*

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good manners; but I have already taken such repeated liberties of advising you on that head, that to say more were needless, or perhaps unacceptable.' This was plain speaking. He then touches on some discreditable panegyrics on the author of *Tristram*—'odes as they are called,' notoriously written by Hall Stevenson. 'Whoever was the author, he appears to be a monster of impiety and lewdness. Yet such is the malignity of the scribblers, some have given them to your friend Hall; and others, which is still more impossible, to yourself, though the first ode has the insolence to place you both in a mean and ridiculous light. But this might arise from a tale equally groundless and malignant, that you had shown them to your acquaintance in MS. before they were given to the publick. Nor was their being printed by Dodsley the likeliest means of discrediting the calumny.' He then alludes to the little biographical portrait in 'a *Female Magazine*' and asks, 'Pray, have you read it, or do you know the author?'

That he really scarcely cared to disguise what was his private conviction as to these matters, is plain from the conclusion of the

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letter. 'But of all these things, I daresay Mr Garrick, whose prudence is equal to his honesty or his talents, has remonstrated to you with the freedom of a friend.' If these were mere untrue rumours, how should Mr Sterne merit any such expostulation? And finally, by an admirable panegyric of the actor, he skilfully points the moral, and indirectly hints to Mr Sterne a course of conduct which he might imitate with profit. 'He (Mr Garrick) knows the inconstancy of what is called the publick, towards all even the best-intentioned of those who contribute to its pleasure or amusement. He (*as every man of honour and discretion would*) has availed himself of the public favour to regulate the taste, and in his proper station to reform, the manners of the fashionable world; while by a well-judged economy, he has provided against the temptations of a mean *and servile dependence on the follies and vices of the great*. In a word, be assured there is no one more sincerely wishes your welfare and happiness than, reverend sir, W. G.'

Making allowance for a natural anxiety to save his own credit as a patron, by keeping his *protégé* steady, it must be said again,

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that this is an admirable letter. It had been well for this turbulent prelate had he been always thus temperate.

The following day, from Prior Park, he sent a copy of his admonition, together with Sterne's letter, to Garrick. It explains clearly the meaning of his advice. 'I heard enough,' he wrote, 'of his conduct in town since I left it to make me think he would soon lose the fruits of all the advantage he had gained by a successful effort, and would disable me from appearing as his friend or well-wisher. Since he got back to York, I had the enclosed letter from him, which afforded me an opportunity I was not sorry for, to tell him my mind, and with all frankness If it have any effect, it will be well for him; if it have not, it will be at least well for me, in the satisfaction I shall receive in the attempt to do him service.'

On the 19th, Mr Sterne replied. There is a tone half-wounded, half-defiant, rather different from the humble, grateful cadences of the first. He protests he would willingly 'give no offence to mortal, by anything which I think can look like the least vio-

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lation of either decency or good manners.' Still, at the same time, it is hard in a work of the riotous complexion of *Tristram* 'to mutilate everything in it, down to the prudish humour of every particular.' 'I will, however, do my best,' he goes on, '*though laugh, my Lord, I will, and as loud as I can too.*'

He then clears himself from any participation in 'the Odes, as they are called;' and there is no reason why we should not accept this explanation. They were sent to him in a cover anonymously, and after striking out some of the grosser portions, he showed them round to all his friends as 'a whimsical performance.' This would account for his receiving the credit of their authorship. Garrick, too, who was skilful at *vers de société*, had threatened him with an Ode; and he naturally concluded that this was his performance. True, it was in Hall Stevenson's hand, but their correspondence had been interrupted for nineteen years, and it was natural that he should have forgotten its character. But as soon as he discovered who it came from, he 'sent it back with his extreme concern a man

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of such talents should give the world such scandal.'

He then speaks with genuine feeling of the cruel onslaughts which had been made on his character and his works. There is a soreness in his tone which, in spite of his vaunting declaration that he would 'laugh loud,' shows that he was deeply wounded.

'Of all the vile things wrote against me, that in the *Female Magazine* was the most *inimicitious*. These strokes in the dark, with the many kicks, cuffs, and bastinadoes I openly get on all sides of me are beginning to make me sick of this foolish humour of mine, of sallying forth into this wide and wicked world to redress wrongs. Otherwise I wish from my heart I had never set pen to paper, but continued hid in the quiet obscurity in which I had so long lived. I was quiet, for I was below envy, yet above want; and indeed so very far above it that the idea of it never once entered my head in writing, and as I am £200 a year further from the danger of it than I was then, I think it never will.' A year afterwards Mr Sterne was describing his temperament to a less reverend intimate—'I would else just

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now lay down and die; and yet in half an hour's time I'll lay a guinea I shall be as merry as a monkey, and as mischievous too, . . . so that this is but a *copy of the present train running* across my brain.' Fame and profit are not parted with so cheerfully, nor is the ruefulness of a moment of despondency to be accepted as a true choice. Even as he wrote the '*mischievousness*' and '*merriness*' of the monkey were not far away, and there was surely balm in the recollection that 'the Bishop of Carlisle called yesterday.' This episcopal patronage of a 'heteroclite Parson' grows every instant more surprising.

A reply from Warburton, written apparently by the earliest return post, closes the correspondence. His explanation had somewhat warmed the Bishop into cordiality, who writes in the same happy mixture of advice, compliment, and even irony, which distinguished the first. It ran: 'It gives me real pleasure that you are resolved to do justice to your genius, and to borrow no aids to support it, but what are of the party of honour, virtue and religion. You say you will continue to laugh aloud. In

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good time. But one who was no more than even a man of spirit would wish to laugh in good company where priests and virgins may be present. Notwithstanding all your wishes for your former obscurity which your present chagrined state excites, yet a wise man cannot but choose the sunshine before the shade; indeed, he would not wish to dwell in the malignant heat of the dog-days, not for the teasing and momentary annoyances of the numberless tribes of insects abroad, *but for the more fatal aspect of the superior bodies.*' A friendly and prophetic hint as to his ecclesiastical prospects of preferment, which it were well he had weighed in his 'sweet retirement' at Coxwold. 'I would recommend as a maxim to you what Bishop Sherlock formerly told me Dr Bentley remarked to him, that a man was never writ out of the reputation he had fairly won but by himself.' A wholesome truth and effort at remonstrance, which, however, is unlikely to have had any effect upon a character such as Sterne's was. The whole is creditable to Warburton, who displays a delicacy and moderation surprising to those

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familiar with his usual rough free-lance mode of action, and the portraits done of him by Churchill.

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TRISTRAM AT HIS DESK



CHAPTER XIV

TRISTRAM AT HIS DESK

FAIRLY established at Coxwould by July,* he was now at work on his new volumes. On that ninth of June, when he sent his sermons to Warburton, he was sitting down to make a beginning, and he got on rapidly with the work. But so acutely had he felt the rough handling of the critics, that before he had written two or three pages, his thoughts strayed back to his still raw wounds, and the cruel 'bastinadoes' inflicted by 'the scribblers.' He could not resist the temptation of showing his scars to the world, and dealing with them in Shandy fashion, possibly to deprecate further rough usage. But he had not yet learned that the happiest retort against such attacks was passiveness, or at least the affectation of indifference. 'Never poor jerkin,' he wrote, 'has been tickled off at such

* [June.]

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a rate as it has been these last nine months together pell-mell, helter-skelter, ding-dong, back stroke and fore stroke, side way and long way, have they been trimming it for me.' He then turns back to the severest of all the attacks, that in the *Monthly Review*, and addresses them with comic expostulation. 'You, Messrs the Monthly Reviewers, how could you cut and slash my jerkin as you did?'

A little further on—a few days later in time—he has still the same bogie before him, and makes an earnest protest against those pedants of criticism who are 'so hung round and befetished with all the bobs and trinkets of their craft, like a native of the Guinea coast; and then introduces that familiar figure of 'the stop-watch critic,' who has figured on a thousand platforms since. 'And what of this new book the whole world makes such a rout about?—O! 'tis out of all plumb, my Lord; quite an irregular thing. I had my rule and compasses in my pocket. —Excellent critic!' He then rambled off into a curious preface, placed, according to true Shandean eccentricity, about the middle of the third volume—

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still apologetic—still appealing from ‘the scribblers’—striving hard to prove, in a curious mixture of raillery, serious argument, and illustration, that wit and judgment are not antagonistic qualities. For ‘the scribblers’ had insinuated, that whatever might be his pretensions to the one, they effectually precluded his having any share of the other; and while sitting at his writing-table, with his ‘fur cap’ on, ‘dashing and squirting’ his ink about on his books and furniture, he casts his eye downwards upon his cane chair, fitted with ‘two knobs.’

Even while he wrote, his health was sinking below its usual feeble condition. He talks of his ‘weak nerves’ and of that ‘vile cough’ of his, which visits him with more than ordinary severity just as he is closing his fourth volume, while his head ‘aches dismally.’ These were, no doubt, the wages of his London campaign. Nor had his thin, wasted figure gained strength or flesh by that round of dissipation of which he pleasantly reminds the reader, hinting the improbability of some state of things ‘unless you were as *lean* a subject

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as myself.' Still, he was furnished with 'that careless alacrity which, every day of my life, prompts me *to say and write a thousand things I should not,*' and which, in default of health, made him feel its want less acutely.

He was now working diligently. By the first day or so in August—in little more than three weeks—his third volume was finished, and he was stopping for breath at the threshold of Slawkenbergius's strange adventure. Among his London friends was a certain Mrs Fergusson, to whom he seems to have always written with what he calls 'the careless irregularity of an easy heart,' and in the gayest mood of his own natural Shandeism. All his letters to ladies have more or less of this free humour, plainly in imitation of Swift's familiar gossiping with Stella. He wrote to her as 'my witty widow' on the 8d of August, and has just risen from the last sheet of his book with brains 'as dry as squeez'd orange,' in which condition it is hard to think of writing to a lady of wit, except in 'the honest John Trot style of *yours of the 15th instant came safe to hand,*' etc. This 'vile plight I found

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my genius in,' inclined him to defer writing until the next post, in the hope of getting 'some small recruit, at least of vivacity, if not wit, to set out with;' but on second thoughts 'a bad letter in season seemed preferable to a good one out of it,' and so 'this scrawl is the consequence, which, if you will burn the moment you get it, I promise to send you a fine set essay in the style of your female epistolizers, cut and trim'd at all points. *God defend me from such, who never yet knew what it was to say or write one premeditated word in my whole life.*' 'I deny it,' he goes on, 'I was not lost two days before I left town, I was lost all the time I was there, and never found till I got to this Shandy Castle of mine.' He has already laid out a fresh expedition to London when he means 'to sojourn among you, with more decorum, and will neither be lost nor found anywhere.'

It was to this very lady he had the year before confided the secret that he was busy with a novel, adding, 'Laugh I am sure you will at some passages.' To her he now reports progress of how far he had gone with the new volumes. He 'wished to God' he

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was at her elbow, as he is longing to read them 'to some one who can taste and relish humour; this, by the way, *is a little impudent in me*, for I take for granted a thing which their high mightinesses, the world, have yet to determine; but I mean no such thing, I could wish only to have your opinion. Shall I in truth give you mine? I dare not, but I will, provided you keep it to yourself. Know, then, that I think there is more laughable humour, with equal degree of Cervantic satire, if not more, than in the last; but we are bad judges of the merit of our own children.'

He was now at work on the companion volume. Not all his taste for carnivals, and the general frivolities of society, seems ever to have interfered with settled habits of curious reading and industrious writing. No wonder that near the completion of his task he should exclaim humorously, 'What a rate I have gone on at curveting and frisking it away, two up and two down, without looking once behind, or even on one side of me. I'll take a good rattling gallop, but I'll not hurt the poorest jackass upon the road. So off I set, up one lane, down another, through

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this turnpike, over that, as if the arch-jockey of jockeys had got behind me. . . . He's flung—he's off—he's lost his seat—he's down—he'll break his neck—see if he has not galloped full amongst the scaffolding of the undertaking critics—he'll knock his brains out against some of their posts. . . . Don't fear, said I, I'll not hurt the poorest jackass upon the king's highway.' He then thinks of Warburton, and the 'story of Tristram's pretended tutor,' and niches in an amende to his patron. '“But your horse throws dirt—see, you have splashed a bishop.” “*I hope in God 'twas only Ernulphus,*” said I.'

In short, so diligently had he laboured, that by the first week in October such persons as took the *London Chronicle* read in their copy of October the 9th, a very cheering announcement for all Shandeans:—

'The public is desired to take notice, that the THIRD AND FOURTH VOLUMES of *Tristram Shandy*, by the author of the first and second volumes, will be published about Christmas next. Printed for R. & J. Dodsley, in Pall Mall, where may be had:

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- ‘ 1. A New Edition of the first two volumes.
- ‘ 2. The *Sermons* of Mr Yorick, published by the Rev. Mr Sterne, Prebendary of York.’

The caution as to the new volumes being from the pen of ‘the author of the first and second,’ may have been in consequence of an impudent counterfeit which had just appeared—a sham third volume, by one Carr, which for similarity of type, shape and everything but genius, had taken in a few readers and some buyers. It will be seen, too, that *Tristram* was travelling gaily through successive new editions; and that in spite of the ‘day-tall critics,’ and the ‘trimming of his jacket’ by the *Monthly Reviewers*. For these new volumes Dodsley gave no less a sum than three hundred and eighty pounds, a large sum considering the size of the volumes, and an excellent test of the book’s popularity. It was, however, not to be paid until six months after it had gone to press.

But just now, down at his retirement, he was aspiring to the full-blown dignity of a

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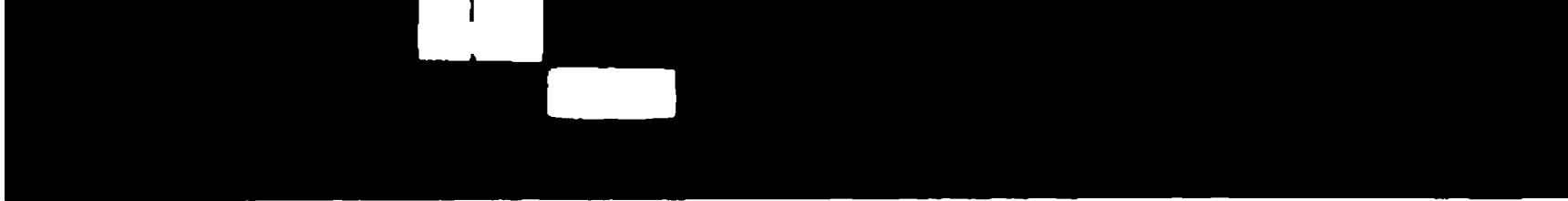
Doctor of Divinity. He had even written a 'clerum' as an exercise. But he wisely forebore. Perhaps he thought that the title-page of *Tristram Shandy*, by the Rev. Laurence Sterne, D.D., endorsed though it was by high ecclesiastical authority, might offend. He did not proceed further than his 'clerum.' It was about this date that he took his share in that droll pictorial partnership* which Dr Dibdin, the eminent virtuoso (librarian also to the noble family of Spencers, who were friends and patrons of Sterne's), heard of when he came to York city long after, upon his bibliographical tour. Once the Doctor came to York, and with his friend, Mr Atkinson, explored the quaint old city and its curiosities. Among other matters Mr Atkinson showed him an old oil painting, rather rudely executed, but characteristic enough, representing a mountebank doctor and his man, exhibiting on a platform in the open street. The Bearded Dulcamara shows the face of one 'Mr Brydges,' a jovial York citizen of Mr Sterne's set—and

* [The pictorial partnership must have been in pre-Shandian days; whereas the *clerum* is first mentioned by Sterne to John Hall Stevenson in a letter dated July 28, 1761.]

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in the face of the Doctor's man, who wears a sort of clown's dress, are to be recognised the features of Mr Sterne. An exaggerated, but still a good likeness. The whole was a sort of pictorial *jeu d'esprit*; it is said that Mr Brydges sat to Mr Sterne for the figure of the quack doctor, while Mr Sterne sat to him for the clown. The father of Atkinson knew Mr Sterne, and had many curious stories about him, which, like so many other curious recollections, have, unhappily, faded out. A rough out-door sketch of Mr Sterne, however, escaped destruction, and the father remembered well and told his son of the long, shambling figure—ill-dressed and slovenly—roaming abstractedly through the narrow York streets, talking to itself, and attended by a little procession of jeering York boys.

A SECOND LONDON VISIT



CHAPTER XV

A SECOND LONDON VISIT

HE was now in town, and found London in a curious flutter and confusion. Every eye was on the palace and its new tenant. Everyone was following 'this charming young King,' as Walpole called him, and noting his grace and good nature, 'which breaks out on all occasions.' About ten days before Christmas Day, he arrived in town with his *Tristram* MSS. in his valise. The time is almost fixed by a fresh advertisement of the Dodsleys, dated December 19th, announcing that the new book would be out in the course of the next month—a notice likely to be given on the delivery of the MSS. to the printers; and by a letter of Mr Sterne's written on Christmas Day, the tone of which shows he had been in London about a week.

From the moment of his arrival, the old carnival set in. The flood of visitors and

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reciprocal visitings, feasts, dinners, politics, with correcting of proofs, left him not an instant. His dinner list was, as usual, full, and by a little computation we can discover, that for somewhere about five weeks he never dined one day at home! and he was besides afraid 'that matters would *be worse* with him.' These dinner testimonials so long sustained without change or fickleness, must be accepted as the best testimonials to his wit and spirits and powers of conversation.

The new *Shandys* had been read in MSS. to Mr Croft at Stillington Hall, and were now shown about London to a selected few. The Crofts, however, had misgivings, and were naturally nervous about the curious adventure of Slawkenbergius—the secret significance of which could not be misunderstood—and Mr Croft wrote him a sort of friendly remonstrance. Mr Sterne acknowledged this friendly act very gratefully, but reassured his 'kind friends at Stillington,' because 'it shifts off the idea of what you fear to another point,' as the satire 'is levelled at those learned block-heads, who in all ages have wasted their time and learning upon points as foolish.'

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In London, however, there were no such scruples. ' 'Tis thought here very good—'twill pass muster. I mean not with all. No, no! I shall be attacked and pelted either from cellars or garrets, write what I will; and beside, must expect to have a party against me of many hundreds, who either do not, or will not, laugh. 'Tis enough if I divide the world—at least, I will rest contented with it.'

Mr Sterne shared in the general infatuation about the 'charming young King.' He wrote enthusiastically about him to his friends at Stillington—how he rose at six for business, rode out at eight 'to a minute, looked into everything himself, and was determined to stop the torrent of corruption and laziness.' He was very intimate with Lord Rockingham, and the witty, 'flashy' Charles Townshend, with Mr Charles Spencer, and other men of politics; and writes to his country friends with a political wisdom and mysteriousness very natural but highly amusing. '*How it will end we are all in the dark.*' The importance in this last sentence is almost comic.

Mr Sterne very wisely kept on good

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terms with his present ecclesiastical superior, Archbishop Gilbert. Miss Gilbert was now in London, and to her he paid the delicate attention of lending some prints, which he bought for the Crofts. All through he seems to have been in favour with the bishop who ruled in his diocese. *Tristram*, meanwhile, was being hurried through the press. He wrote to his friends that it would be out on the twentieth of January: but it, in fact, did not appear until a week later. On the twenty-seventh, the third and fourth volumes were published.

This second Shandy instalment was received with a mixed chorus of cheers and hisses. His prediction about the attacks and 'peltings' from garret, came true exactly as he had foretold; but there was compensation in the handkerchiefs waving from drawing-room windows. One half of the town abused it with tremendous bitterness, the other extolled it as extravagantly. It has been said that its success was not so decided as that of the first volumes. But writes Mr Sterne, 'the best is, they abuse and buy it at such a rate that we are going on with a second edition as fast as possible.'

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This was written in the first week of March, so the first edition had been exhausted in about a month.* This was a speedy sale, for not yet had set in the palmy day when an edition would be swept off in a week.

The garreteers soon began the storm of abuse. Mr Griffith's men led the attack, encouraged by that indiscreet confession of sensitiveness in his apostrophe to 'Messieurs of the *Monthly Review*.' They justified their previous attack in the coarse, brutal language which they were accustomed to lavish on Goldsmith and others. They spoke of *Tristram* as 'the wanton brat now owned by its reverend parent.' Other faults might be extenuated, but the crying sin of the new publication was dulness: 'Yes, indeed, Mr Tristram, you are dull, very dull!' and the special points of dulness selected, show at least a curious taste on the part of Mr Griffith's men. We are sick, they say, 'of my Uncle Toby's wound in his groin: we have had enough of his ravelines and breast-works: we can no longer bear *with Corporal Trim's insipidity*.' If the half of the town

* [The second edition appeared on May 21 — four months after the first edition.]

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that abused the book reflected this just criticism, Mr Sterne might well console himself.

He was every day growing more and more the fashion. Mr John Spencer took him down with him to Wimbleton—that Mr John Spencer who was nephew to the Duke of Marlborough. Before the month was out, Mr Spencer was created Lord Viscount Spencer, and was to have the next *Shandy* instalment dedicated to him. Then Charles Townshend had told Mr Sterne, in confidence, that he was to be shortly made Secretary at War; so political interest was gathering fast. How was it that he could not put these friends to some profit? Now came Lady Northumberland's 'Grand Assembly,' for which Mr Sterne hurried up from Wimbleton. Lady Northumberland had been giving 'Grand Assemblies' all the season; which Horace Walpole has enrolled among his festivals of honour.

One of Mr Croft's sons, Stephen, was in the army; the other became a brother canon of Mr Sterne's in the Cathedral. With so powerful a friend in London, who was, besides, intimate with the Secretary at War, it seemed likely that something might

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be done for the military son; and Mr Croft accordingly applied to Mr Sterne. Mr Sterne writes back in all the flurry and tumult of his London parties—‘I will ask him; and depend, my most worthy friend, that you shall not be ignorant of what I learn from him. Believe me *ever, ever* yours, L. S.’ A week or so afterwards, Mr Sterne met with an accident. He got a ‘terrible fall,’ which sprained his wrist and prevented his holding a pen. He had in the meantime been thinking over his friend’s business, and having been asked to breakfast one morning by a Mr V., ‘a kind of right-hand man to the Secretary,’ he took care to sound him on the matter. The Secretary’s secretary strongly discouraged the advisability of taking any step just then.

The old York enemies of Yorick were not idle all this time, and a malicious rumour was presently set afloat in that city to the effect that the fashionable Prebendary was ‘forbid the Court.’ An absurd tale on the face of it; this species of honourable banishment being confined to the court of the French King. Mr Sterne told the story to his friends, and it afforded them much amusement. As he himself put it, he was scarcely

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of sufficient prominence to attract so much notice. As for those about him, he added with a certain pride, 'I have the honour either to stand so personally well known to them, or to be so well represented by those of the first rank, as to fear no accident of that kind.' But it has been the fate of his 'betters,' who have found that 'the way to fame, like that to Heaven, is through much tribulation; and till I have had the honour to be as much maltreated as Rabelais and Swift were, I must continue humble, for I have not filled up the measure of half their *persecutions*.'

Some comforting balm was this unexpected tribute to his popularity. Dr Dodd had entertained Peers and Countesses at the 'Magdalen,' and made effective appeals to their sensibilities and purses; and the committee of the last-named charity knew well how effective would be Mr Sterne's name, when they requested him to advocate their claims on one Sunday in the first week of May. The committee, at one of their meetings, directed a notice to be inserted in the daily papers, that the Reverend Mr Sterne was to preach for the Foundlings; and on

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the Sunday following the chapel was filled by a large and fashionable congregation. This was on the 8d of May; and two days afterwards the treasurer reported to the committee, that 'the collection at the Anthem' amounted to the sum of £55, 9s 2d.* It went round all the newspapers, though they did not know the precise amount, that 'a large collection' had been the result of Mr Sterne's appeal.

Early in July this second London Carnival ended, and Mr Sterne had to return again to Coxwold. Seven months' absence in the year from cathedral and parochial duties did not certainly show much clerical ardour, and supposed a tolerant and indulgent diocesan. But Mr Sterne seems now to have laid out the future programme of his life after this pattern: the early portion of the year to be spent in London, and the last to be spent at Coxwold, in racing through two *Shandy* volumes, meant to be his regular annual contribution, and to furnish him with the means of supporting his London campaign.

* From the Minutes of the Foundling Hospital. But a charity sermon for the Magdalens—a far more 'sensational' charity—brought over a thousand pounds!

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‘I shall write as long as I live,’ he wrote to a lady; and all through his books are promises of this steady two-volume yield, unless, indeed, ‘this vile cough kills me in the meantime.’ It is to be feared, indeed, that ‘the incense of the great,’ and his craving for fashionable pleasures, had completely put all the serious duties of his profession out of his head.

A worse result still was, that it brought him back to his village in a state of restlessness and despondency, wholly unsuited to his office. Almost as soon as he arrived, he was pining to be back in London again. His friend Stevenson—with a little malice—had warned him, that his eyes would be turning back to the promised land. He just passed through York, and then sat down and wrote his friend a letter, pitched in the very lowest key of low spirits. Raw Yorkshire weather had set in, and ‘a thin death-doing, pestiferous north-east wind’ was blowing in a line direct from Crazy Castle turret ‘full upon me.’ ‘’Tis as cold and churlish just now as (if God had not pleased it to be so) it ought to have been in bleak December, and therefore I am glad you are

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where you are, and where (I repeat it again) I wish I was also.' He should have broken the fall, he thinks, from London, alas! to country dulness, by walking about the streets of York for ten days 'before I entered on my rest. I have not managed my miseries,' he adds, 'like a wise man; and if God, for my consolation under them, had not poured forth the spirit of Shandyism into me, which will not suffer me to think for two moments upon any grave subjects, I would else just now lay down and die.' Then he speculates on the humour of his friend at Crazy Castle, who had also his humours and hypochondriacs. He may find this letter 'cursed stupid.' But that, 'my dear Hall, depends much upon the *quota hora* of your shabby clock. He presently breaks out—'Curse of poverty and absence from those we love; they are two great evils, which embitter all things; and yet, with the first I am not haunted much.' Something, perhaps, of Mr Dodsley's £650 remained over, though a good deal must have been swept away in the six months' campaign. 'O Lord! now are you going to Ranelagh to-night, and I am sitting sorrowful as the Prophet. When we

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find we can by a shifting of places run away from ourselves, what think you of a jaunt there (to Mecca), before we finally pay a visit to the Vale of Jehoshaphat—as ill-fame as we have, I trust I shall one day or other see you face to face. So tell the two Colonels, if they love good company, to live righteously and soberly as you do—and then they will have no dangers without or within them—present my warmest wishes to them, and advise the eldest to prop up his spirits, and get a rich dowager before the conclusion of the peace—why will not the advice suit both? *Par nobile, &c.*'

The two colonels were of the hopeful guild of Crazy Castle. He then announces that the following morning he will sit down to the fifth *Shandy*. 'I care not a curse for the critics. I'll load my vehicle with what goods *He* sends me, and they may take 'em off my hands, or let them alone. I am very valorous—and it's in proportion as we retire from the world, and see it in its true dimensions, that we despise it—no bad rant! God above bless you. You know I am your affectionate cousin,

' L. STERNE.

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‘What few remain of the demoniacs greet. And write me a letter, if you are able, as foolish as this.’

Students of character will see in this reckless, profane screed, certain signs of a decay and demoralisation. When two loose men address each in this fashion, there is evidently a sympathetic reference to pleasures enjoyed in company. But there is another letter indited to this *frère débauché*, the date of which we can pretty nearly fix about this time; for in it he reminds his friend that he is past forty—or about forty-five—and it will be remembered they were students at Cambridge together. This precious letter* is in Latin, of a ‘dog’ kind, and very justly excited Mr Thackeray’s scorn. It is necessary to give a few extracts, however disagreeable the task may be. ‘I know not what is the matter with me,’ he says, ‘*but I am more sick of my wife than ever*, and am possessed of a devil that drives me to the town, and you, too, are possessed with the same devil, which keeps you in the desert, to be *tentatum ancillis tuis et perturbatum uxore tua*—believe me, my Antony, this is not the way

* [For the complete text, see Letter L.]

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to salvation either present or eternal, for you are beginning to think of your money, which, saith St Paul, is the root of all evil, and you have not sufficiently said in your heart that now is the time to lave myself and make myself happy and free, and do good to myself as Solomon exhorts us, who says that there is nothing better in this life than that a man should live jollily, eat and drink and enjoy good things, because such is his portion in this life.' Then he speaks of his own going up to town—not for fame or for to show himself off—'Nam diabolus iste qui me intravit non est diabolus vanus, aut consobrinus suus Lucifer—sed est diabolus amabundus qui non vult sinere me esse solum . . . et sum mortaliter in amore et sum fatuus, etc.* I am obliged to omit the rest. This, it must be said, is a shocking letter, and becomes worse when we think of the peaceful pastoral enjoyments at Coxwold, which he was praising to more decent folk. The clergyman that could write such stuff as this, must at this time have become quite depraved.

* Yet this letter was printed by his own daughter, who, we must charitably hope, was ignorant of its meaning.

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His wife, Mrs Sterne—lost sight of, forgotten, left behind in all the series of London expeditions; now possibly grown more patient, dowdy, and provincial than ever—had long dropped out of Mr Sterne's course. She would have been out of place up in London, among his fine friends. It was, in fact, the old, old story—incompatibility; without an effort on either side to aim at even an artificial compatibility, by which a sort of harmony is sometimes brought about. On his side, a taste for town life and pleasures, which made him look on London as his settled home, Coxwould as a banishment. On hers, an apparent apathy, not to say indifference, joined with a disagreeable candour, fatal to nuptial peace. We can almost hear her speaking: 'As to matrimony,' wrote Mr Sterne at this time, 'I should be a beast to rail at it, for my wife is easy, but the world is not; and had I stayed from her a second longer, it would have been a burning shame—*else she declares herself happier without me*—but not in anger is this declaration made, but in pure, sober good sense, built on sound experience. She hopes you will be able to strike a bargain for me before

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this time twelvemonth, to lead a bear round Europe: *and from this hope from you, I verily believe it is that you are so high in her favour at present.*' That is, from the prospect of Mr Hall finding an opening for the removal of Mr Sterne for a year at least.

Yet within a month, when he had started afresh with his *Shandys*, and had got more reconciled to his country life, we can look in at Coxwold on a picture that seems as domestic as could well be desired; indeed, almost pastoral in its flavour. His pen was scampering over the page, his ideas were coming fast. He was charmed with his work. Some new features in Uncle Toby's character specially pleased him. ' 'Tis my hobby horse, and so much am I delighted with my Uncle Toby's imaginary character, that I am become an enthusiast.' A pardonable complacency, when we reflect that this portion of labour contained the exquisite story of Le Fever, a masterpiece of true feeling and dramatic power. He was sitting at his table in the centre, 'squirting his ink about.' 'My Lydia helps to copy for me, and *my wife knits and listens* as I read her chapters.' This

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is a healthier tone; but still, it will be said, how could he set a child of thirteen or fourteen to copy *Tristram*? But the phrase is 'helps' to copy; and it curiously happens that this fifth volume, upon which he was then at work, is about the most harmless of all the *Shandys*. Any young lady of the present time might 'help to copy it' without danger. But the truth is, as will be seen later, Mr Sterne was jealously tender of all that concerned his Lydia; and the fact is only noticed here, because it has been made one of the popular charges against him, that he was so incredibly corrupted as to put into his child's hands pages that made grown-up people blush.

She had inherited from him a weak chest, and had now suffered three winters continuously from a severe asthma. His own health had not mended. This hard writing, the stooping over his desk, together with the churlish Yorkshire winters, could not have fortified the 'fine spun fibres' of Yorick's chest, which were perpetually giving way. Preaching, too, was a duty he could not give up, and which the rector of three parishes would scarcely be permitted to forego.

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It was always 'fatal' to him; and this year he did not suspend that arduous duty. Before Christmas he was 'very ill' indeed—had broken a fresh vessel in his lungs, which he set to the account of hard writing in the summer, 'together with preaching, which I have not strength for.' He seems to have been at Death's door, and began to think seriously, as soon as his two new volumes were off his desk and in the hands of the public, of trying a holiday in some new scene, which would be of profit to his health and spirits, and possibly to his purse. A project of 'leading a bear' across Europe—of taking a young gentleman of rank and property on the grand tour—seems to have been in his mind just now. It was rumoured that his friends, the Northumberlands, were looking out for 'a governor' for their son, and Horace Walpole had been asked to recommend a person for the office. But Mr Sterne, after all, was scarcely the person to be intrusted with the supervision of youth, and perhaps needed 'a governor' himself. Later, he himself sketched—and sketched most dramatically—the average type of the men of this class.

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On Monday, December the 21st, came forth Mr Sterne's usual Christmas present, the fifth and sixth volumes of *Tristram Shandy*, 'price 4s. sewed,' but not from the hands of the Dodsleys. Becket and De Hondt were the new sponsors, and he was to have no other publishers up to his death. We do not know the reason of this change. But the new volumes were eagerly welcomed by the public, and here was their author, in company with them, up in London, once more set free. A delightful incident always in Mr Sterne's life; and wistfully looked for with that announcement in the public newspapers. For it brought vacation—holiday—life itself; and as the books appeared—so, too, as surely appeared Mr Sterne.

Warburton, down at Prior Park, had read them before the 27th of the month. Since his letters of advice, we have not heard of the stormy bishop. But one who could take his counsel so defiantly as did the 'heteroclitic parson,' who could answer with that independent speech, 'Laugh I will, my Lord, and that as loud as I can,' was not likely to be acceptable to such a patron. Let any

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one who wishes to know the pattern of man whom he favoured, turn over the letters of his *protégé*, Hurd, and see how far an abject servility may be carried. To him Warburton wrote his opinion of the new volumes.

‘Sterne has published the fifth and sixth volumes of *Tristram*. As to the style and matter, they are about equal to the first and second; but whether they will restore his reputation with the publick is another question. *The fellow himself is, I fear, an irrevocable scoundrel.*’

We have, however, Warburton’s testimony to their being at least equal in merit to the first two volumes. Walpole wrote flippantly, they were ‘the dregs of nonsense;’ this, too, when the ‘Story of Le Fever’ was being copied into every journal in the kingdom. There were few dry eyes as that marvel of true pathos was read. Noble ladies wrote to Mr Sterne, to tell him how it had affected them. The famous image of the accusing spirit was considered all but sublime by Garrick. These volumes, however, contained but too many of those little clap-trap devices with which Mr Sterne had begun to help himself over chasms, where his

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own natural humour had begun to flag. Worse than all, he had begun to accept typographical extravagances *as* real humour—for the whole is sprinkled over profusely with dashes, stars, imitations of fiddles tuning, wrong pageing (as though by a mistake of the binder) and a page utterly blank—a pendant for the black pages which marked Yorick's death. Thus we have an odd series of zigzag lines, like a meteorological registry, and gravely signed at the corners 'Inv. T. S.' or 'Sculp. T. S.' like a regular engraving. We have 'dashes' of every length from an inch long downwards. Still, take them all in all—dashes, flourishes, and the general miscellany of such conceits—we can scarcely wish them away. Artificial as they are, they go to make up the historical character of the book, and are so many scraps and patches on the harlequin's jacket. With many weak portions, and a good deal of what may be called *remplissage*, these new volumes contain some of his happiest scenes. The reception of the news of young Shandy's death—the dialogues between Mr and Mrs Shandy on putting Tristram into trousers—the story of Le Fever—the elaborations

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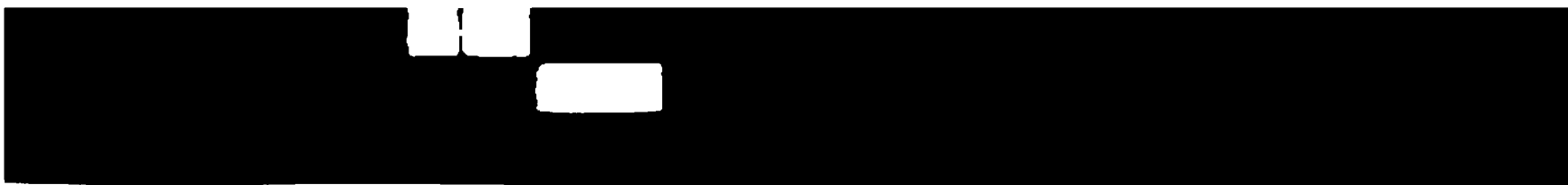
of my Uncle Toby's military tactics, and the council of war between him and his lieutenant—are at least equal to Mr Sterne's best efforts, and should redeem many shortcomings.

In these volumes, too, was found another device to draw purchasers—the author's signature on the first page of each volume—a practice which he adhered to in each of the volumes that followed. This was not even original, as some reviewers gave out that 'it had been practised by a certain authoress well-known to the public.' But it was loudly advertised, and the public were bidden to take notice—'* * * each book is signed by the author.' This must have entailed much drudgery on Mr Sterne, and could not have increased the sale materially. If we are to accept his own statement—one of those unnecessary, injudicious statements, to which the momentary candour of Shandeism prompted him—the sale of this instalment was rather a falling off. Later on, he indiscreetly told the readers of volumes seven and eight that he had several 'cartloads' of the two preceding volumes on hand.

He had inscribed these books to Lord,

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Viscount Spencer,' and specially dedicates the story of *Le Fever* to Lady Spencer, for which he had no other motive 'which my heart has informed me of, but that the story is a humane one.' The books themselves, 'are the best my talents, with such bad health as I have, could produce,' and the whole is ushered in by some odd Latin mottoes—one from Horace, one from Erasmus, and the third from the decrees of a Council at Carthage.



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CHAPTER XVI

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BEARING in mind the conditions under which the new volumes had been written, it is wonderful they should have contained any freshness or buoyancy at all. That last winter's attack had well-nigh cut short Yorick's career, and all but stayed that stream of volumes which he hoped would run for forty years. He seems to have barely struggled through on this occasion, and as he familiarly tells his readers, when they next met again, 'Death himself knocked at my door.' He owned that he had a narrow escape, and it did indeed seem marvellous how that spent chest of his could rally from so many shocks. When he grew convalescent he could scarcely speak across the table to his friend Stevenson, and what he spoke of humorously as '“these two spider legs of mine”' (holding one of them up to him)' were scarce able to support him.

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These were serious warnings not to be treated lightly. He was himself a little frightened, and consulted his friend as to whether it would not be advisable to 'fly for my life.' Eugenius, if not Hall Stevenson, made his counsel more grateful by a compliment. "Then, by Heaven," said Tristram, "I will lead him (Death) such a dance he little thinks of . . . to the world's end, where, if he follows me, I pray God he may break his neck." "He runs more risk there," said Eugenius, "than *thou*." No wonder the allusion 'brought blood into the cheek from whence it had been some months banished.' Mr Sterne seems to have hearkened to his friend's counsel, and began to get ready for his travels.

On all sides, the sick Shandean seems to have met with every kindness and consideration. The new archbishop, Dr Hay Drummond, at once excused him from all parochial work for a year, or even two years—if it should be necessary—'humanely,' Mr Sterne adds, speaking of this indulgence. But a yet more serious difficulty lay in the way. He was looking to the sunny south of France to restore his shattered chest, but

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the two countries were at war—an insuperable obstacle to easy continental travelling. It was understood that peace was not very far off, and many English of quality had already got as far as Paris—the first division of their grand tour; and some were staying there for the season, affiliated to the societies of that brilliant capital. A little interest would smooth away all difficulties as to passports; and Mr Sterne, casting about for some powerful interest, thought of his *Tristram* dedication and the great Mr Pitt. The favour was one of no very special magnitude, but it was graciously accorded, with ‘good breeding and good nature,’ as he described it. The road was now open to him, and he might depart when he pleased.

His friends, knowing his careless, Shandean turn, must have thought him ill-suited to travelling alone in a strange country. And we may accept that little story as true, which he tells us of his friend Hall’s taking him aside and asking him how he was situated as to funds. He had thought of a hurried trip down to Bath, possibly for the waters; but gave up the idea. He had hoped, also, to tempt his friend Stevenson

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to join him. But the latter was getting his *Crazy Tales* ready for the press, and could not go.

Just as he was setting out upon looking over his finances, he found he was 'twenty pounds short,' and wrote plainly, and even bluntly, to Garrick, 'Will you lend me this sum? yours, L. S.' Garrick sent it at once. But three years after, when Garrick himself was travelling abroad, the actor got very disturbed about this sum, which he had not as yet been repaid; and wrote home nervously about it. 'I hope Becket has stood my friend about what he ought to have received from me some time ago. I had a draught upon him from Sterne, ever since he went abroad: pray hint this to him, but tell him not to be *ungentle with Sterne*.' Every glimpse we have of this artist seems to show him in the same amiable character—yet always tempered with a steady good sense and firmness.

The very outset of this journey is characteristic. He confides to us the story of his abrupt departure with a pleasant confidence, shifting it into the *Sentimental Journey*. 'I had left London,' he says, 'with so much

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precipitation, that it never entered my mind that we were at war with France; and had reached Dover, and looked through my glass at the hills beyond Boulogne, before the idea presented itself, that there was no getting there without a passport. *Go but to the end of a street, I have a mortal aversion for returning back no wiser than I set out.*' So he got a young French count, whom he had known in London, to take him in his train as far as Calais. Mrs Sterne and his daughter were to join him later at Paris. Finally, all was arranged: and about Twelfth-day his chaise was at the door. '*Allons!*' said I, 'the post-boy gave a crack with his whip, off I went like a cannon, and at half-a-dozen bounds got to Dover.'

The regular mail-boats departed, from both sides, only twice in the week. But small vessels were to be hired at any time, when the wind served; the exclusive use of one being secured for about five guineas. He hurried down to Dover, as we have seen, 'at half-a-dozen bounds,' and 'never gave a peep into Rochester Church, or took notice of the dock at Chatham, or visited St Thomas at Canterbury, though they all

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three lay in my way.' He was very ill on the passage, 'sick as a horse.' 'What a brain! Upside down—hey dey! The cells are broke loose into one another, and the blood, and the lymph, and the nervous juices, with the fix'd and volatile salts, are all jumbled into one mass.' A faithful description: for the 'Packets' were no more than open pilot or fishing boats, of small tonnage, and wretched interior accommodation, which, too, was to be enjoyed at exorbitant and extortionate charges.

Over the incidents of the old posting journeys from Calais up to Paris hangs a picturesque cloud. They are full of colour and good scenic effect. The elements are all gay and pleasant to think on; the long, straight roads, with the rude-paved causeway in the centre; the interminable files of trees; the old posting-houses, always welcome; the gay, quaint towns, of which there were but hurried glimpses; the canals; the snatches of fortification; the women peasants, in white caps and sabots, along the market road; the men peasants, in woollen liberty caps, blouses, and sabots also; the douaniers, and the gendarmes, who suggest the drama of 'Robert

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Macaire.' We may put in, too, the huge vehicle itself, built up with mountains of luggage, reeling and swaying; a huge, rickety, shabby, yellow argosy, all over dried dirty mud splashes, which toils up tremendous hills behind its string of horses, and leaves the music of bells behind. Wonderful, too, are the Normandy horses, round, dappled, shining, sprinkled with chocolate, snowy white, pink-nosed, long-tailed, kicking, lunging recklessly, shrieking, and biting each other's flanks; flinging their hind legs over the ropes; in frosty weather crashing down upon the ice in a living heap, only to be scourged again to their feet by the terribly sacrilegious being who sits aloft, holding the reins and discharging imprecations. Picturesque the postilions and estafettes, with the glazed, shining hats, the gay, embroidered jackets, and the huge boots, like a species of leathern tub. Picturesque the motley company of the *rotonde*, the *coupé*, the *intérieur*, and the more humble accommodation of the roof; the priests, soldiers, laymen, and *commis-voyageurs*, who were lifted up and set down at many stages. Picturesque the changing of the Normandy

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horses; the halting by night at the Barriere, when the lanterns flashed upon sleepy faces inside, and gruff gendarme voices demanded passports. But, side by side with the picturesqueness, rises the memory of grievous and most painful discomfort of weary nights, acute suffering from the rude stone blocks over which the heavy machine was dragged, and actual torture from the cramped position of the limbs; uneasy snatches of sleep, procured by the agency of the strap that hung from the roof, and on which the sufferer, leaning his elbow, sought a temporary relief and a disturbed dream.

The whole economy of this 'service' remained curiously unchanged up to the days when the Chemin de Fer du Nord was opened. At this very day we turn into the old-fashioned inn yard, in the Rue Notre Dame des Victoires, and see lying up there in ordinary, the yellow wrecks of these ancient conveyances, in shape and pattern such as we see them in the prints.

No one was so fitted as Mr Sterne to relish these new associations. He had a perfect instinct for all things French; both in tone, colour and feeling. His account of

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his French travels has a marvellous French flavour; is racy of the air, and colour, and fragrance of French dress and manners and thought. The change from the rough, practical Yorkshire life must have been inexpressibly welcome. His sketches of the old towns are dashed in as oddly and as quaintly as are their projecting gables and twisted streets.

He entered Calais when it was 'dusky in the evening,' and left it betimes in the morning, when it was 'dark as pitch,' so he could see but little of that postern of France. Later, however, he was to come with his Shandean brush, and sketch it in. Still, he gives it an amusing descriptive chapter, founded on 'the little my barber told me of it as he was whetting his razor.' His Calais chapter, put together in the true guide-book fashion, is a very pleasant satire on the crowd of travellers who 'wrote and gallop'd,' or who even 'wrote galloping,' and deluged the British public with inventories of all they saw. It is amusing to see how accurately he has copied M. de la Force's book,* with its meagre guide-book

* [*Nouveau Voyage en France, avec un Itinéraire et des Cartes* (2 vols. Paris, 1724, and often reprinted), by Piganiol de la Force.]

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tales about Eustache de St Pierre, and the number of inhabitants and convents, and the exact measurement of the 'great square,' which, 'strictly speaking, to be sure it is not, because 'tis forty feet longer from east to west, than from north to south;' and how he even leads off with the same antiquarian flourish of 'CALAIS, *Calitium Calusium*,' where, however, with his common inaccuracy in spelling, he has put Calusium for *Calesium*.

He got a chaise, and began to post with all speed to Boulogne. He got to that gay, motley town early on the morning of his first day in France, and saw from the windows of his chaise the odd and doubtful miscellany of his own countrymen, who found it a happy refuge. The sun was rising and glistening on the bright colours of the town as he clattered by, and he marked the speculative glances directed at the new arrival.

These are not many strokes, yet the whole is a picture; and there is a breath and fragrance which commends itself to one who will turn back and think of his own first bright morning in France.

He was gone presently, with fresh horses.

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‘“Get on, my lad,” said I, briskly, but in the most harmonious tone imaginable, for I jingled a four-and-twenty sous piece against the glass, taking care to hold the flat side of it towards him as he looked back; the dog grinned intelligence from his right ear to his left.’ And so they clattered into Montreuil—famous Montreuil of a ‘Sentimental Journey’—than which no town in all France ‘looks better on the map.’

By his *Book of French Post Roads*, page 86, he journeyed ‘*de Montreuil à Nampont, poste et demi; de Nampont à Bernay, poste; de Bernay à Nouvion, poste; de Nouvion à ABBEVILLE, poste.*’

At Nampont was the well-known picture of the dead donkey*;—to become famous later; but Abbeville disgusted him by its wretched inn. At Abbeville, too, he entertained that dismal meditation on the manner of his death, which he would prefer ‘at some decent inn,’ where ‘the few cold offices I wanted would be purchased with a few

* I recall the amiable naturalist, Charles Waterton, discoursing by the hour on Sterne, and he used to expatiate on the scene of the ‘dead ass,’ declaring that he could write an essay on it, and that from a naturalist’s point of view it was perfect. He however declared that the notion was copied from Sancho’s ass.

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guineas,' and not at his own home, among his family; a wish, it will be seen, but too faithfully fulfilled. All along his journey he indeed took with him such dismal broodings, over the 'long-striding scoundrel of a scare sinner,' whom he was flying from. Disgusted with his Abbeville inn, he was gone at four in the morning. And 'with the thill horse trotting, and a sort of up-and-down of the other, we danced it along to *Ailly au Clochers*, famed in days of yore for the finest chimes in the world (Mr Sterne's own words have a chime of their own—and we seem to hear the rattling of the harness and the jingling of the bells) . . . and so making all possible speed from—

Ailly au Clochers, I got to *Hixcourt*;
from *Hixcourt* I got to *Pequignay*, and
from *Pequignay* I got to *Amiens*.'

But at night, when the weary traveller was struggling for a little sleep, a train of comic troubles set in; among which was 'the incessant returns of paying for the horses at every stage, with the necessity thereupon of putting your hand into your pocket, and counting from thence three livres fifteen

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sous (sous by sous).’ ‘Then monsieur *le Curé* offers you a pinch of snuff, or a poor soldier shows you his leg, or a shevaling his box,’ all substantial aids to the rational powers being thoroughly awakened. Thus, he got on to Chantilly, where he saw the famous stables of the Prince of Conde, hurried through St Denis without turning his head (‘richness of their treasury! stuff and nonsense!’)—took a postilion there ‘in a tawny yellow jerkin.’ At last, late of a January evening, at nine o’clock, this ‘man, with a pale face and clad in black,’ heard the rough Paris pavement clattering under his chaise heels, and the whip of the calimanco postilion sounding ‘crack, crack!—crack, crack!’ and saw the ‘villanously narrow’ streets flitting by, but dimly lighted, however, and kept saying to himself: ‘So, this is *Paris*!—and this is *Paris*!—humph!—*Paris*! the first, the finest, the most brilliant. The streets, however, are nasty.’ And the pale man in black was taken, still clattering—still crack, crack!—through the narrow, winding turns of the Quartier St Denis—he looking out with a sort of dazed wonder at what flitted by. ‘One—two—three—four—five—six—seven—

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eight—nine—ten; ten cookshops! and twice the number of barbers! and all within three minutes' driving.' A savour, too, of soup and salad, salad and soup, wafted in at the window—and the people passing, as well as they can be made out in the dark by the flare of lanterns at the corner, seem all to wear swords. This was his first glimpse of Paris. Most faithful and true to nature is the description, as those who recall their first entrance into a strange foreign town will acknowledge.

The Paris of 1762, through which Mr Sterne was driven the night of his arrival, was the old Paris of the novels and the theatres; a mass of new glittering palaces and *Places*, set down in a huge wilderness of dark, narrow, winding streets, dangerous alleys, and *culs-de-sac*. Apart from the more splendid trophies of the building, pomp and luxury of the 'Louis', it was a tremendous gathering of dangerous 'quarters,' these 'quarters' being made up of tall, black tenements—old, crazy and tottering—grim as prisons, and each swarming with a gaunt, squalid, famished population—the whole caked and crusted together in one

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corrupt mass. There were bridges across the Seine: and on those bridges were crammed together tall, tottering houses, as in the days of Old London Bridge. All through those nine hundred streets which Mr Sterne counted, and which he found so 'villanously narrow, that there is not room to turn a wheel-barrow,' was a miasma of frightful odours. He remarked, too, the dim light at nights—which made those nine hundred streets so dangerous, for they were lit with some eight thousand candles in damaged lanterns, which went out every now and again with a gust, and left all in darkness. He noted the miserable 'lean horses' which drew the *fiacres*; poor broken-down beasts from the stables of princes and seigneurs.

The social and intellectual state of refined Paris at this moment was highly curious. Just now had set in the reign of the philosophers, and that odd affectation of liberality and democracy which it became the rage to wear, even among the most exclusive circles, like one of the new fashionable head-dresses. And though the Encyclopædia had been suppressed, the Diderots and D'Alemberts, and

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D'Holbachs, fortified by a crowd of intellectual queens of society, gave laws in many a *salon*. But there was a still more propitious tone to welcome Mr Sterne's arrival. A frantic Anglomania had set in, which broke out in every way that a mania could manifest itself, taking the shape of monstrous extravagances in hats, wigs, and other articles of dress; also in a preference for articles of a solid English shape and pattern; and, more abstractedly, in a passion for English works of fiction and philosophy, which were translated wholesale.

Not less welcome was he to the French, than they to him. He was a Lion to begin with, and above all an English Lion. He was at once, with scarcely an hour's delay, plunged into the crowd of the wits, philosophers, deists, actors, courtiers, and abbés. He was in the *salons* in a moment. The doors were thrown open for him. His friend Garrick, who was known to many there, had no doubt stood his sponsor here as he had in London. But in truth he found hosts of friends already on the spot. Here was Mr Fox and Mr Macartney, who afterwards went to China and became Sir

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George, and Lord Macartney, and a whole crowd of 'English of distinction.' *Tristram*, not translated yet, nor to have that honour for many years to come, had travelled to Paris before him, and was prodigiously talked of, if not read. With their characteristic politeness, the new Lion was at least made to believe that his book was being devoured by eager Parisians of quality; but of all books in the world it was least likely to be intelligible to a Frenchman.

No wonder that he should write home in a tumult of rapture of the flatteries and distinctions with which he was welcomed. He had been there little more than a week when the current of dinners began to flow; and he was already bound a fortnight deep. It was the old London story over again; but there was here a new feature, not found in his London programmes—the 'little suppers.' There was the difficulty about his passports, but when such great persons as the Count de Limbourg and Baron d'Holbach had offered the Prime Minister Choiseul 'any security for the inoffensiveness of my behaviour in France, which is more than you will do, you rogue!' it may be con-

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ceived everything was soon made smooth. There seems to have been a difficulty about his passports, for, as has been mentioned, he had started before Peace had been formally arranged between the countries. And very many pleasant scenes in the 'Sentimental Journey'—the journey to Versailles to see the Minister, and the interview with the Shakspearian nobleman, who took him for Hamlet's Yorick—must be shifted back to this first visit. So, too, with his description of the little arts by which he made his way in French society—how he won over the old Marshal Biron, and Madame de G., and Madame de Vence, the young Count de Faineant; and without which he could never have been invited to M. Popelinière the great Farmer-General's concerts.* The Count de Bissie begged that he might be introduced to him, and when Mr Sterne paid him his complimentary visit, he discovered him actively reading *Tristram*. 'An odd incident,' Mr Sterne calls it, and no

* He merely passed through Paris when on the 'Sentimental Journey,' and by that time was perfectly at home there. He had not time, therefore, to be 'making his way' in society, as he describes. A later letter, too, shows that it was at this season that he was attending the Farmer-General's concerts.

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doubt flattering, but to a later posterity eminently French. This nobleman showed him many civilities, and even allowed him a sort of private admission through his own apartments, to see the Orleans Gallery. But by the Baron d'Holbach he was treated with special honours as Garrick's friend, as well as for his own merits. His establishment was supported splendidly, his house was thrown open three days in the week, and was filled with all 'the wits and the scavans who are no wits.'

To Garrick he wrote with boyish rapture of all these honours. He was charmed with everything. His health was marvellously restored for the short time, though he was 'somewhat worse in the intellectuals, for my head is turned round with what I see, and the unexpected honours I have met with here. He writes a whole catalogue of all his doings. He has been to the doctors of the Sorbonne. He was just starting with Mr Fox for Versailles. He had been the night before with Mr Fox to see Clairon at the Opéra Comique, in *Iphigénie*, one of her grand parts; and it was natural that one of his theatrical taste should be enchanted with

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her magnificent acting. So delighted was he, that he with 'fifteen or sixteen English of distinction' joined together in taking a couple of boxes, which gave them the right of selecting a special piece for the night. They chose his *cheval de bataille*, 'The Frenchman in London,' in which he was to 'send us all home to supper, *happy*.' 'Ah, Preville,' said Mr Sterne, 'thou art Mercury himself.' So admirable was he in turns and changes of gesture and actions 'Mercury' would seem to have been a happy personification of his peculiar style. He must have known and met Preville often. Later, when Foote and Sterne were in Paris, the 'great English actor used to have the great French actor to supper at his hotel, and the Frenchman would give imitations of his brethren, to the great delight of a young fencer, who was also invited.* The French actor, too, gave suppers to Garrick and Clairon, and other notorieties.†

Mr Sterne says he could write his friend 'six volumes of what has passed comically in this great scene these fourteen days,' and we can accept his statement. We could

* See Angelo's 'Letters.'

† Garrick's 'Letters.'

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wish, too, that even some little instalment of what had passed so comically, had come down to us in a few hasty Shandean jottings. He had been introduced to Mr Foley, of the firm of Foley & Panchaud, whom the fashionable patronised in banking matters, and found Foley 'an honest soul.' The banker had of course been very accommodating to the friend of Mr Fox and of the 'fifteen or sixteen English of distinction.' In short, he winds up a letter written after one fortnight's stay, in tumultuous spirits, with a hope, that in a fortnight more he would 'break through, or retire from the delights of this place, which in the *sçavoir vivre* exceeds all the places, I believe, in this section of the globe.'

He was now driving about in state, and was already in sober black, decently mourning with the Court. And while at times he drove about in his *fiacre*—which cost him a good many livres' hire in the day, and was seen looking from its window, a pale, thin Englishman in a suit of black; at other seasons, we may be sure, he found his way to the quais, where old books were sold, and began to *bouquiner* with his old zest.

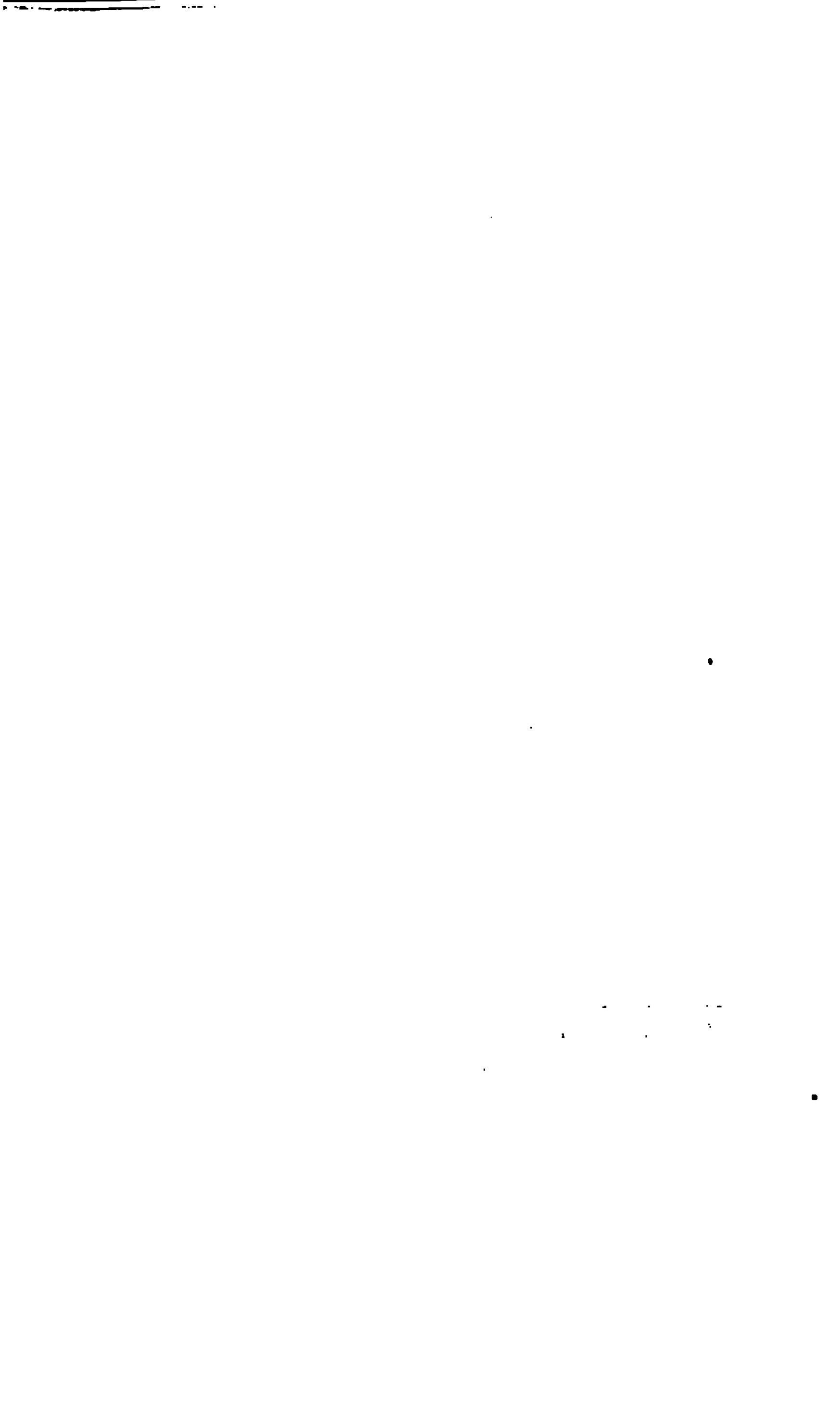
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Mr Heber had a copy of the Shandean '*Serées*,' well thumbbed, and with this inscription, '*L. Sterne, à Paris, 8 livres.*' And when Mr Wilkes was in Paris, Mr Sterne presented him with a copy of Barbou's fine edition of *Catullus*, which was sold with the rest of that gentleman's books.





*Laurence Sterne. After a Painting by
Carmontelle*



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**MR STERNE IN THE FRENCH
SALONS**

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CHAPTER I

MR STERNE IN THE FRENCH SALONS

AFTER six weeks more we find him still lingering at Paris: he had been introduced to ‘one half of their best goddesses, and in a month more shall be admitted to the shrines of the other half.’ His odd, eccentric style of speech and manner had been much relished, and being now firmly established, and knowing his ground, he gave full scope to his humour. He used to ‘Shandy it away fifty times more than I was ever wont, “and talk more nonsense than ever you heard me talk in your days,” and to all sorts of people.’ He could boast that he had ‘converted many into Shandeism.’ Scraps of his speech and general oddity struck on the Minister Choiseul’s ear, who was heard asking (in better French than Mr. Sterne reported it),

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‘Qui le diable est ce homme là?’ ‘Ce Chevalier Shandy.’ He had, he was told, heard of those ‘ten thousand things I cannot write,’ and of ‘those thousand things I do which cut no figure but in the doing.’ A greater compliment still was paid him than merely exciting the curiosity of a prime minister. The Duke of Orleans had formed an odd collection of the portraits of some ‘odd men,’ which made a sort of department in his famous collection; and an artistic gentleman who lived with him, got Mr Sterne to sit for a full-length, to add to the eccentric catalogue. It was considered a most ‘expressive’ likeness.* It was intended that there should be an etching done of this picture.

Not many years ago this portrait came to light, and a chromo print of it was published by Messrs Colnaghi. They informed me that some time since they became possessed of the collection alluded to, and that the name of ‘the gentleman who lived with him’ was Carmontelle, who also painted Garrick. Among the rest was this characteristic likeness of Yorick, painted with much force and

* This portrait, however, is not to be found in the gorgeously illustrated ‘Orleans Gallery.’

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quaintness. The figure is about five or six inches high, drawn in profile, dressed in scrupulous black and elegant lace ruffles. The face is rather old for a man of his age, but there is no mistaking the likeness, and there is a Voltairean expression in the profile, as well as in the spare figure. He would seem to be standing on the terrace of the Palais Royal, and the painting itself has much merit from its spirit and the Meissonier-like treatment of the whole. The picture has been reproduced by the process of photo-gravure, and the colouring is so good that it may be readily mistaken for the original. We have now, therefore, several excellent likenesses of Sterne, including the well-known Sir Joshua, the capital bust by Nollekens, of which I have a small copy, and this little work of Carmontelle's.

Garrick was naturally anxious to know the state of the French stage. That tremendous question of the union of the two theatres was now in everyone's mouth. Scraps and snatches of green-room scandal absorbed the wrapt attention of the great metropolis. But the union of the theatres was made almost a party question.

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Clairon also welcomed all the world, and Mr Sterne, to her house on Thursdays, 'when *she gives to eat* (as they say here) to all that are hungry and dry.' She more astonished than delighted Mr Sterne. Her style was often the usual French declamatory pattern; which it requires French training to appreciate. 'I cannot bear preaching,' he said; 'I fancy I got a surfeit of it in my younger days.'

On the 19th of March, he wrote to his friend that he was to be entertained that night by going specially to see a tragedy damned. 'Peace be with it and the gentle brain that made it.' Clairon, at first disgusted with her part, with all the fitfulness of an actress, had now taken it up with '*fureur*.' It was at last fixed for this 19th of March, when Mr Sterne was anticipating such a pleasant evening — but at the last moment it was withdrawn.

The fortnight, which at the end of January was to have been the furthest term of his stay, had stretched to the middle of April, and he had not moved. He was enraptured with the place and his reception. He was 'charmed' and '*extasié*,' for at this time everything here was hyperbolised, 'and if a woman is but simply pleased 'tis *je suis*

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charmée, and if she is charmed 'tis nothing less than she is *ravi*-sh'd. . . .' He could enjoy his amusements with far more relish — for his short stay had already been attended with wonderful results upon his health. 'Your prayer for me of *rosy health*,' he wrote to his friend, 'is heard. If I stay here for three or four months, I shall return more than reinstated.' It does, indeed, seem likely, that the air of Paris in the depth of winter, with the unwholesome accompaniments of balls and suppers, would have had a very serious influence on his physical constitution. It was the wonderfully mercurial tone of his spirits which, in a new scene, and among new and livelier objects, carried him triumphantly over the drawbacks of a rude climate and an enfeebled chest.

The Lent brought with it 'a vile suspension' and utter interruption of all dramatic amusements; and then, to Mr Sterne's delight the run of plays and operas set in again. Still, it was the tragedy vein that was in favour: and the stilted declamation of the French school. 'Here the comic actors were never so low — the tragedians hold up their heads — in all senses.' They had no versatile

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actor who could play 'Abel Drugger' and a gloomy tragedy the same evening, like '*one little man*'—who supported 'the theatrical world like a David Atlas.'

This compliment accompanied a little request for patronage in Garrick's own department. Mr Sterne had met a literary 'lady of talent' in Paris, who had taken the trouble of translating and adapting Diderot's drama of *Le Fils Naturel*. He does not give her name, but we can have no difficulty in identifying her. For some three or four years later there was a certain Irish 'Mrs E. Griffith' persecuting Mr Garrick in London on the score of this very 'Fils Naturel'; piteously importuning him in many letters, to bring out both this and other adapted dramas of Diderot's. Mr Sterne did not think very highly of it, considering the speeches too long and savouring of 'preaching,' and, strange to say, he objected to it because it had 'too much sentiment.' He not only interceded with Garrick, but also tried to induce Becket, his own publisher, to take it up, apparently without success. Mr Sterne had the disagreeable duty of reading through the 'sentiment' and the 'preaching'

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— which must have been out of compliment to Diderot, whose friend she was.

Very many were the ‘great houses’ at which Mr Sterne was made welcome. On March the 14th, the Baron de Bagge gave a concert, with the choicest music and company that could be got in Paris, and here the odd English Mr Shandy was to be seen. On the following night, the Prince de Conti had a party, and Mr Sterne was there also. There was an opulent Farmer-General, who kept a standing corps of musicians and actors in his house, and gave concerts and plays alternately to the noblest persons in Paris; this gentleman made Mr Sterne free of his table and his entertainments while in Paris. His guest wrote home how he had been *fêted* by a M. Popignière— but the true name of the ‘Farmer’ was Popelinière. No doubt he went about in his loose, pleasant, Shandean way, talking to M. Diderot and other French friends of the ‘M. Popignière’ he was going to dine with on that evening— perhaps to their amusement. At this time, and even to the end, Mr Sterne was blundering terribly in his French.

In this new whirl he did not forget those

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he had left behind. He found time to send to his bankers, day after day, for letters from his wife, and was greatly distressed at their irregular arrival. He found time also to write long, affectionate and gossiping letters, in his most graphic, dramatic style — which were to amuse the lonely tenants of Coxwold. He described for them the great fire that had broken out during the fair of St Germain, which had consumed all the wooden booths in a few hours, with all their contents, and how ‘hundreds of unhappy people are now going crying along the streets ruined totally.’

He sends them another little *croquis* hastily done — but quite a picture in itself. He has been ‘these three mornings to hear one Père Clément, the famous preacher, who delights me much. . . . Most excellent, indeed; his matter sound, and to the purpose — his manner more than theatrical, and suggests, both in his action and delivery, Madame Clairon, who, you must know, is the Garrick of the stage here. He has infinite variety, and he keeps up the attention by it wonderfully — his pulpit oblong, with three seats in it, into which he occasionally casts himself — goes a little way, then rises by a gradation of four

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steps, each of which he profits by as his discourse leads him. In short, 'tis a stage, and the variety of his tones would make you imagine there was no less than five or six actors on it together.' Mr Sterne, no doubt, was wishing for such a stage down at Coxwould pulpit, and the 'dramatic discourses of Mr Yorick' would have exactly suited this scene.

The true Paris cold had set in fiercely, and he talks cosily of his French wood-fires. 'I shall never burn coals, I fear, again.' He pleasantly lays out that when they get back again to Coxwould, they will always have, at least, a mixture both of wood and coal. He tells them of his progress in French, and that he speaks it 'fast and fluent, but incorrect both in accent and phrase:' (there is something in this unartificial confession very pleasing, and even significant, when we come to estimate his character,) 'but the French say, I am most surprising for the time,' a compliment very often paid by that polite people to encourage English students of their tongue.

Still, though marvellously recovered and showing a colour in his cheeks now though

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he 'came with no more than is in a dish-clout,' he was beginning to think seriously of the South of France. It had been better such a journey had been thought of some months before; and had the winter just gone by been spent at Toulouse or Montpellier, instead of at Paris, he might indeed have been 'fortified in my inner man, beyond all danger of relapsing.' He had grown very intimate, too, with the younger Crebillon — the free-and-easy author of the *Sofa* and *Les Egaremens*, whom a romantic English girl was by-and-by to come over and marry, incited by the perusal of those questionable romances. So intimate indeed was Mr Sterne and the French Sentimentalist, that the result was the extraordinary and truly Shandean contract which, if it had been carried out, would have been one of the oddest literary curiosities conceivable. It was agreed that he was to write 'an expostulatory letter' to his English friend 'upon the indecorums of *T. Shandy*,' to which Sterne was to *riposter* 'by recrimination upon the liberties in his own works — these are to be printed together, Crebillon against Sterne — Sterne against Crebillon, the copy to be sold, and the money equally divided.

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This is good Swiss policy.' The convention was, however, never carried out. Perhaps the Frenchman was lazy, as Mr Sterne, indeed, anticipated he might be. More to be regretted is his new companionship with such men. Fresh from Hall Stevenson, and the free men of London and Crazy Castle, he was flung into the worst circle of Frenchmen — such as Crebillon and his friends. It is but too plain that he had left his bands and cassock behind him at Coxwould, and had voluntarily abnegated any such reverence as social courtesy might pay to his clerical character. But, at the same time, it must be borne in mind that there was but one society and one circle in Paris; and into this all entered. Here was to be found Garrick, who wrote home boastfully to his friends, 'We had a fine laugh at Baron d'Holbach's, where you dined once, about the wicked company I keep. I am always with that set.' There has never been any question about Garrick's propriety; and harder measure should not be dealt out to Sterne than to him. But though this bit of *persiflage*, as he called it, was never written, he thought of Crebillon five or six years afterwards, and put his novel, *Les*

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Egaremens, in the hands of Madame R——'s maid, whom he stopped to ask the way to the Hôtel de Modène.

Among the French in Paris he gave full reins to his natural spirits: and to them his peculiar temper seems to have been very acceptable. That curious mixture of sentiment and humour which is eminently French, was his characteristic also. 'I laugh till I also cry,' he wrote, 'and in the same tender moments cry till I laugh; I Shandy it more than ever.' This Shandying was clearly a sort of burlesque speech — a kind of grotesque exaggeration, and leaning to what is called 'galimathias' — also very French.

In various portions of his writings he has dropped a hint or two in reference to success in society, which, coming from one who had himself succeeded, are very precious. 'We get forward in the world,' he tells us in his *Sentimental Journey*, 'not so much by doing services as receiving them;' a true principle which is yet only a basis.

It is plain his social gifts were very great: and no one could tell a story with more spirit and effect. A specimen of this 'Shandying' has come down, and we are privileged to stand

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behind his chair at the dinner Lord Tavistock gave on the 4th of June* to the few English then left in Paris, in honour of the King's birthday. A kind of diplomatic factotum named Dutens, who had just come from Turin with Mr Needham, was of the party, and found himself seated between Lord Berkeley and a tall, thin, odd-looking man, whom he presently found out to be '*le fameux Sterne*'—the English Rabelais. There was a good deal of toasting and drinking '*à l'Anglaise*.' The conversation naturally turned on Turin, where a good many of the party were going; when Mr Sterne asked his neighbour if he happened to know a M. Dutens when he was at that Court. The Frenchman, with a Frenchman's readiness, answered that he knew the gentleman very intimately indeed; at which reply the whole company began to laugh. Mr Sterne, with less quickness than might be expected, imputed this hilarity to the recollection of some ridiculous foibles of the absent diplomat, and fancied he saw a good opening for a little 'Shandying.' 'I believe he is rather odd,' said Mr Sterne.

* This may have been the dinner alluded to by Walpole at which some eighty English sat down.

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‘Quite an original,’ said the other. Stimulated by fresh laughter, Mr Sterne began to sketch in pleasantly an imaginary Dutens, and told some comic stories, with good effect, which M. Dutens, then present, gravely corroborated. The latter went away by-and-by, when the company told Mr Sterne of his mistake, and warned him that the caricatured diplomatist was only restrained by the courtesies of society from at once resenting the insult, and would most likely take prompt measures in the morning. Next day he was waited on by the English Rabelais, who came to excuse himself for his little *bêtise*, and made many apologies; to be only at once reassured by Dutens, who told him that ‘if he only knew the man as well as *he* did, he would have said something a good deal more unflattering.’ Mr Sterne was much pleased with this Shandean answer, embraced the other, and went his way.

It is M. Dutens himself who tells the story, and tells it pleasantly. It is a good story; such as might be told of Sheridan or Theodore Hook, and laughed at heartily. There had been, besides, a good deal of wine drunk ‘à l’Anglaise’ at a time when it was the fashion

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to celebrate various anniversaries with deep draughts. Mr Sterne's sketches could not have been very personal or offensive, else the Frenchman would have readily stopped his further progress; for in France it is ridicule that kills. Finally, Mr Sterne would readily have known that his gown was sufficient protection against a cartel; and therefore his voluntary apology in the morning, for his unconscious discourtesy, was, if anything, rather creditable to him. It is the hard fate of Sterne that some such little commentary as this must attend on nearly every incident of his life; for nearly every incident of his life has been curiously distorted and misrepresented.

He was now looking forward eagerly to a meeting with his wife and his daughter Lydia. That 'sad asthma,' which perhaps he felt his daughter 'Lyd' had inherited from him, made change of air indispensable, and in the month of June they were getting ready for the journey. The favourite stock charge against him has been this trading in printed sentimentality, with an utter deficiency in the genuine affections and practical domestic sympathy. But no one who glances over

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the shower of letters in which this petted child of French society thinks, and plans, and plots, and repeats his injunctions over and over again — anxiously racks his brain for fresh injunctions, all to help this wife and child safely on their road — can ever venture, with decency, to repeat the charge. This remarkable series of letters does not merely negatively vindicate him from unkindness, but establishes him as the most affectionate of husbands and fathers. Indeed, his love for his 'Lydia' — in this so curiously resembling that of Wilkes for *his* 'Polly' — should redeem many sins and imperfections. It is even a significant token of his feeling, that he was not content to wait for their arrival to present Mrs Sterne with a couple of snuff-boxes (one set in garnets, the other decorated with his portrait), but must send them off at once by a friend.

Paris even then was scarcely a cheap capital; and his long winter campaigning had begun to tell a little on his finances. He had most likely received advances on the sale of the new *Shandys*, and he was now writing home, pressing his publisher, Becket, to take the copyright off his hands. His letter is

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business-like and comprehensive, taking in every point likely to be raised in the discussion of the arrangement. He is willing to 'make a handsome allowance for all charges, and the drawbacks on your side.' He then rather timorously hazards a supposition that 'there are 3000 (copies) disposed of,' and hopes the remainder will be sold off by the beginning of next year. (The copies were in truth going off a little slowly, but there was no very marked falling off in the sale.) Any little balances were to be paid over to Mrs Sterne when she was passing through London, who would give her receipt for the money. She was, in short, to negotiate the matter — 'the sale of the *Shandys* — and then the copyright,' he wrote to her, 'Mark to keep these things distinct in your head. But Becket I have ever found to be a man of probity.'

There was other business which was to be directed also by Mrs Sterne. A certain common near Stillington or Sutton, and bearing the odd name of Rascal, was about being inclosed; and there was besides a little transaction that looks very much as though money was being raised upon this little property.

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At least a bureau had to be broken open to get at certain 'deeds' of Mr Sterne's. Later, a power of attorney came over to Paris for Mr Sterne's signature. She was also to look out for some one to do Mr Sterne's official 'visitations' at Pocklington.

He seems to have exhausted himself devising means to make their expedition comfortable, and provide against the annoyances of what was then a serious journey. He bought them a chaise from a friend of his, a Mr Thornhill, who let him have it almost for a song. A gentleman, Mr R——, who was going to travel in Italy, saw it, and offered him thirty guineas over what he had paid. He sent it down to Calais, where it was to wait for them. He then got Mr Colebrook, the 'Minister of Swisserland's' Secretary, to write to the governor of the Calais Customs in their favour. He found out 'a good-natured kind of a trader,' a horse-dealer, who was always on the road between London and Paris, and 'who was infinitely friendly,' in the same office to another lady, 'and nursed her on ship-board, and defended her by land with great goodwill,' and secured his useful aid. He sent away letters, one, as it were, on the heels of

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the other, to supply little hints that he had forgotten. The heat was then raging. In Paris 'twas as hot as Nebuchadnezzar's oven,' and he was nervously anxious about the travellers. He earnestly warns them about 'heating their blood' in travelling, and enjoins them to 'come *tout doucement*.' And again he cautions them, 'for God's sake rise early, and gallop always in the cool.' So hot was it then that the 'gentleman of Fortune,' who was about Mr Sterne's chaise, had to be on his road at four in the morning, and dare not travel after nine. He wrote letters to those friends who had been kind to them in London. He sent them their passport. He thought even of little matters of toilette scarcely within his province. 'Lydia must have two slight *negligées*; as for painted linens, buy them in town, as they will be more admired because English, than French.' He consulted a lady friend on the nice point of the proper place for buying silks; found out that they were 'very beautiful and cheap here, as blonds, gauzes,' etc.; and wisely checked an imprudent overloading of their mails with things which could be procured as readily at the end of their journey. Sixty guineas he reckoned

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they must lay out in Paris on this important department. 'For in this country,' he wrote truly, and at the present time it is part of the false homage which the goddess of Paris exacts from her children, 'nothing must be spared for the back; and if you dine on an onion, and lay in a garret seven stories high, you must not betray it in your clothes, according to which you are well or ill looked on.'

He thought of their providing themselves with some useful work-box articles, 'for they have bad pins and vile needles here, so bring for yourself and some for presents.' Tea was fair enough up to Dover, but they should take a little to serve from Calais to Paris. Mrs Sterne was addicted to the minor vice of snuff-taking, and fond of Scotch snuff. He advised her to bring a little mill to grind it, or even she could get her valet to do so, 'twill keep him out of mischief.' She was to bring also 'a strong bottle screw,' for whatever 'scrub we may hire,' as butler, coachman, etc., '*to uncork us our Frontiniac.*'

Another pleasant domestic picture, the motive of which is plainly to draw off Mrs Sterne's mind from the thought of her journey and its discomforts. He tells them they

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will be in raptures with their new carriage. They are to give him a seat. ‘You will wonder all the way how I am to find room in it — ’tis by what the coachmakers here call a cave, which is a second bottom added to that you set your feet on, which lets the person who sits over against you down, with his knees to your ankles. . . . Lyd and I will enjoy this by turns; sometimes I shall take a bidet (a little post-horse) and scamper on before; at other times I shall sit in fresco upon the arm-chair without doors, and one way or other will do very well.’ A charming little picture, done with a genial, good-natured touch, that could only be guided by a warm and affectionate heart. Again, ‘I wish when you come here, in case the weather is too hot to travel, *you could think it pleasant* to go the Spaw for four or six weeks, where we should live for half the money we should spend at Paris. After that we should take the sweetest season of the vintage, and go to the south of France; but *we will put our heads together, and you shall do just as you please in this and in everything which depends on me*, for I am a being perfectly contented when others are pleased; to bear and forbear will ever be my maxim,

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only I fear the heat through a journey of five hundred miles for you and my Lydia more than for myself.'

It was the 18th or 20th of June before they were ready to set out. His letters still came showering in on them. He snatched at the very last moment, in the hope of catching them 'just as you are on the wing.' He wishes to give courage and encouragement.

'You have done everything well,' he tells his wife, 'with regard to our Sutton and Stillington affairs, and left things in the best channel.' As soon as all this London business is off his mind, 'everything else will be a step of pleasure, and by the time you have got half-a-dozen stages, you will set up your pipes, and sing *Te Deum* together as you *whisk* it along.' He has a gold watch ready for 'my Lydia.' 'Write, and tell me something of everything. I long to see you both, my dear wife and child.'

He then huddles together a few more hasty little cautions. No wonder he should say, 'I have almost drain'd my brains dry upon the subject.' They were to take care and look to their luggage on the Dover road. They were to buy a good strong chain, and have

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their trunks fastened on in front, 'for fear of a dog's trick.' They were to take three days on the French roads, for fear of heating themselves; and drink small Rhenish, to keep them cool 'that is, if you like it.' They would find a letter for them at Calais, at the Lyon d'Argent,* to cheer them up on coming out of the packet. He bids them give his love to his friend Fothergill (of the Cathedral), and 'to those true friends which envy has spared me. For the rest, *laisser passer*.' He bids them live well, and deny themselves nothing on the road. He prays 'God in Heaven prosper and go along with you.' He bids her 'kiss my Lydia,' for him. Then, finally encourages them in this sensible, stirring fashion: 'Now, my dears, once more pluck up your spirits; trust in God, in me, and in yourselves. Write instantly, and tell me you triumph over all fears. Tell me Lydia is better, and a help-mate to you. You say she grows like me. Let her show me that she does so in her contempt of small dangers; and fighting against the apprehension of them, which is better still. . . . Dear Bess, I have a thousand wishes, but have a hope for every one of them.

* Grandsires'.

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You shall sing the *jubilate*. So God bless you, adieu. Believe me, your affectionate,
‘ L. STERNE.’

Then, in a postscript, he thoughtfully epitomises all his directions.

‘ *Memorandum* :—Bring watch-chains, tea-kettles, knives, cookery-book, etc.

‘ You will smile at this last article. So adieu.

‘ At Dover, the Cross Keys ; at Calais, at the Lyon d’Argent.’

And so they set out. Never were travellers more diligently instructed. Would any expert in what may be termed the handwriting of the human heart, with these letters before him, hesitate to attribute them to an affectionate husband, and to a careful father ; or to a mind that did not limit itself to profitless, sentimental fancies, but travelled further in considerate and practical directions ?

It was quite necessary that for all considerations he should have a formal extension of his leave ; and he therefore addressed to his Archbishop one of those sensible letters so very different from the tone of the ordinary ones he was in the habit of writing to his

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own merry familiars. No one could so happily assume an air of mixed gravity, respect — with, at the same time, a hint of disguised Shandeism — when he came to address a superior.*

‘PARIS, *May 10th*, 1762.

‘MY LORD, — Mr Kilner, my curate at Coxwold, who is a candidate for Priest’s Orders at the ensuing Ordination, will deliver this into your Grace’s hands. He has served the cure seven months, during which time I have been out of the kingdom, so have so little personal knowledge of him, that I can only certify to his character from the accounts I have had from others: he came extreamly well recommended as a scholar, and a moral man, to me from the clergyman he last assisted; and by all I have heard from time to time of his behaviour in the discharge of his duty in the parish of Coxwold since, he has given neither the parishioners or myself cause to complain. This is all I can take upon me to certify to y^r Grace in his behalf; but he will have the honour to produce certificates

* This letter to Archbishop Hay Drummond, hitherto unpublished with others to be given further on in this work, I owe to Mr Hoggard of York.

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from the neighbouring clergy, which I hope will give your Grace all possible satisfaction.

‘When I arrived here, the Faculty thought I could not live a month. I have lived, however, my Lord, 5 months, and in a gradual restoration of my health, so that I was setting my face towards home, when I was detain’d unhappily by the ill health of my daughter, who, at 14, is fallen into a confirmed asthma; for which she is advised to winter at Toulouse or Nice, as the only chance to save her. Whilst I was soliciting passports for her and my wife, I was unhappily myself attack’d with a fever, which has ended the worst way it could for me, in a *defluxion poitrine*, as the French physicians call it. It is generally fatal to weak lungs, so that I have lost in ten days all I have gain’d since I came here; and, from a relaxation of my lungs, have lost my voice entirely, that ’twill be much if I ever quite recover it. This evil sends me directly to Toulouse, for w^{ch} I set out from this place the moment my family arrives. The D. of Choiseul has treated me with great indulgence as to my stay in France, and has this moment sent me passports for my family to join me.

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Grace's pardon for the liberty in
my situation and that of my
Y^r Grace's humanity, I am sure, will
art in my distresses, and that prompts
lay them open. I wish y^r Grace and
ly all health and all happiness in this
and a better.

‘I am, my Lord,
‘Y^r dutiful and ever obliged servant,
‘LAURENCE STERNE.’

While the Yorkshire travellers were on
their road, the faithful guide who had been
anxiously forecasting all their wants met
with an accident, which went nigh to depriv-
ing him of the pleasure he was so fondly
anticipating. One night during the first days
of July, just after he had gone to bed, one of
those unlucky vessels in his lungs gave way —
exactly what had befallen him when an under-
graduate at Cambridge years before. Before
morning he had nearly ‘bled the bed full.’ A
surgeon was sent for, whom he got to bleed
him in both arms. ‘This saved me,’ said Mr
Sterne, who had faith in the strange Sangrado
doctrines of the time. He had, however, a
narrow escape — had to lie on his back for

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some time without venturing to whisper — but was out in a week. He was very feeble after his attack, and his face must have gone back to the old ‘dish-clout’ hue. He was now indeed paying forfeit, just as he had done for his London campaign.

**THE FIRST 'SENTIMENTAL
JOURNEY'**

CHAPTER II

THE FIRST 'SENTIMENTAL JOURNEY'

AT last, on a Thursday in July, the travellers reached Paris. They had a rapid and delightful journey, and were delighted with travelling. None of the anticipated troubles had presented themselves. Mr Sterne had secured apartments for them, and was rejoiced to have them with him. He at once sat down to write a grateful letter of thanks to the business-friend who had been kind to them in London; and with Mrs Sterne's assistance chose an Indian taffety, which he sent off the very next morning, as a little present for the business-friend's wife. Mrs Stanhope, 'the Consul-General of Algiers' wife, took charge of the parcel. Such little acts as these, though not very much to be insisted on, show a thoughtfulness, and a sense of the practical kindnesses of life, very inconsistent with our notion of a careless, sentimental man.

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The young girl, as may be conceived, was in raptures with the wonderful city of Paris. She could not be torn from the window all day long. But, to her father's delight, she chafed sorely against the necessary torment of being 'frizzled.' But this operation was *de rigueur*, and there was a *grande armée* of *Friseurs* in Paris. It was the fashionable faith. Her little petulance amused him, and he hoped she would always continue the same 'child of nature.' She must have been then a *piquante*, bright-looking girl, but she did not continue to be that child of nature.

They did not remain very long in Paris: scarcely a fortnight. It was time to be moving southwards. That late accident was serious; and the hurrying about which he mentions, possibly sight-seeing, could scarcely suit a newly-repaired blood vessel. He had even the stimulant of figuring before the police, the hero of a truly Shandean adventure.

He was going out some seven miles beyond Paris, and hired a little carriage, which he was to drive himself. With characteristic carelessness, he never looked to the quality of the animal that was to take him so far, until he

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was fairly on the road, when he discovered that it might have been a yoke-fellow for the sorry hack that Yorick used to ride. He had not gone half his journey, when the poor beast dropped down dead in the shafts. It was an embarrassing situation, and there is certainly a ludicrousness in the picture of Yorick holding the reins of the animal. No doubt d'Holbach and the merry men of his set laughed loudly over the story. But they must have been more amused when the '*Chevalier Shandy*' was taken before the police. He began his defence in French, and pleaded for himself and for the poor over-driven brute, who had been worked the whole day previous, without a morsel of corn or hay, 'by a worse beast than himself, namely, his master.' But that French, which he fancied he could 'splutter' so famously, failed on this public occasion. In his odd way, he said he 'might as well have whistled' — he then — always Shandean — fell back on his Latin, and finally, by dint of a shower of words, and those jerks and gestures of his, forced his judge to do him justice, 'no common thing, by the way, in France.'

About the 24th or 25th of July, in the

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midst of the furious French heats, the like of which 'the oldest Frenchman' could not call to mind, the Sterne family started on their journey. So distressing was the sun, that it took them three weeks to reach Toulouse. They suffered so acutely, being 'toasted, roasted, grill'd, stew'd, and carbonated on one side or other all the way,' that he could not bear to talk of it afterwards. It was an expensive journey—too much so for their not very abundant finances. The posting regulations were the most arbitrary and costly that could be conceived.*

Mr Sterne began to write his *Journey* almost as soon as he reached his destination, with French pictures and associations about him, and when the memory of all he had seen was still fresh. The result is some charming sketches, with the bloom and fragrance of the romantic south upon them, full of life and delicacy and colour. These are to be found

* A party of four travelling in their own carriage, were forced to take six horses and two postilions; if a servant (in addition) was sitting behind, the traveller was not indeed compelled to take an extra horse, but had to pay for one. He had also to pay double fare for the first post out of Paris, double fare on passing Fontainebleau,—homage to the King of France if he should be staying there—and also at Lyons. 'Royal Posts,' as they were complimentarily termed, met the traveller at various quarters of France.

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in the seventh volume of *Tristram*; and the traveller who has been down south, and thinks fondly of Tarrascon, and Beaucaire, and Nismes, and Avignon — those names so full of music — and the grape districts of Lunel, and the *Côte rotie* has only to turn over a page or two of Mr Sterne's *Sketch Book*, and he will feel the *tone* of the place stealing back on him marvellously. In his letters, too, Mr Sterne gave little pictures, which show (as has been here so often insisted on) what a literal romance of his life he meant *Tristram* to be.

We can follow them all along the road as they 'scamper it away to the banks of the Garonne;' through Fontainebleau, 'where any English gentleman of fashion may be accommodated with a nag or two, to partake of the sport, taking sure care not to out-gallop the king.' To *Sens* — ('you may dispatch it in a word, 'tis an *archiepiscopal see*'); through Auxerre, where he took my Uncle Toby and Trim, and Mr Shandy, into the Abbey of St Germain, and where the young Benedictine (Mr Sterne always touches his monks very gracefully) pointed them out the tombs of St Maxima and St Optat, this latter, the

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name which Mr Shandy thought so appropriate for a bishop ;* and through Lyons, where they saw the wonderful mechanism of the great clock of 'Lippius of Basil.' All the way the terrific heat accompanied them ; from Paris to Nismes they did not see a cloud 'half as broad as a twenty-four sols piece.' Even at nights they suffered cruelly, being 'eat up at night by bugs and other unswept-out vermin, the legal inhabitants (if length of possession gives right) at every inn we lay at.' Still his health was mending with every stage, he 'had left death, the Lord knows how far behind me. . . . Still I fled him, but I fled him cheerfully ; as he lag'd, every step he lost softened his looks.'

At Lyons came their first misfortune, where their bargain of a chaise broke down, almost at the gate ; and they had to make an inglorious entry into that stately city in a cart, 'higgle-piggledy with the baggage.' This disaster was turned to profit, for 'a pert vamping chaise undertaker' bought their shattered carriage on the spot ; so they

* Dr Ferrier quite missed the point of the allusion, which would indeed escape most readers. Sterne was thinking of the Yorkshire diocese, where the Archbishop had certain rights of nomination known as 'Options,' and which Sydney Smith dealt with long after in his pleasant *Plymley Letters*.

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were now to take boat and have a charming voyage down the Rhone as far as Avignon, through the Côte Rotie and Hermitage, past the old cities of Orange, Vienne, Valence, and Montelimar. Even now the traveller, swept away southward by the Marseilles Express, looks down wistfully, from the great railway bridge, on the Rhone winding and glistening below him like molten silver, thinks of the towns with melodious names that dot its banks.

By the road it was very many posts to Avignon — the journey by water would cost them but nine livres each. The boat went that afternoon, and to fill in the time he consulted his *Itinerary* ('God knows what,' he says — but we know it was La Force's) for the sights of Lyons. The great clock, however, he was told by one of the minor canons as he was entering the west door, 'was all out of joint, and had not gone for some years.' The great *Chinese History*, in thirty volumes, at the Jesuits, he could not see; and the 'tomb of the Lovers,' about which he was very enthusiastic, he found levelled by order of the corporate authorities. He was just sallying out to visit this shrine under the guidance of

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his *valet-de-place*, François, ‘and having called for my bill—as it was uncertain whether I should return to my inn—I paid it; I had, moreover, given the maid ten sous, and was just receiving the *dernier compliments** of Monsieur le Blanc, for a pleasant voyage down the Rhone, when I was stopped at the gate.’ Never was a more welcome interruption, for to it we owe the charming picture of the poor Ass, who ‘had just turned in with a couple of large panniers upon his back, to collect eleemosynary turnip-tops,’ and to whom he gave ten macaroons. Then came the droll incident of his lost ‘remarks,’—a hint of which has taken place, but which is almost too farcical to be true in details; which ‘remarks’ were traced from the pocket of the chaise, where they had been forgotten, to the chaise-vamper’s wife, who had her hair in ‘*papillotes*’ (as he calls them). ‘Oh, Seigneur,’ said he, ‘you have got all my remarks upon your head Madam.’

He ‘just got time enough to the boat’ to save his passage; and before he had sailed a

* This is some of Mr Sterne’s bad French; more of the same imperfect sort will be met with in the text further on.

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hundred yards, 'the Rhone and Sâone met together, and carried me down merrily betwixt them.' He merely passed through 'Avignon,' saw 'an old house in which the Duke of Ormond resided,' and recommenced his land travels. The ladies went in a carriage, he followed on a mule, with a servant upon a horse, and 'the owner of both striding his way before us with a long gun upon his shoulder and a sword under his arm, lest peradventure we should run away with his cattle.' *

And from Avignon he began to move slowly through the richer plains of Languedoc, passing by Beaucaire, with its quaint, curious fair, which flourishes to this hour, and which the elder Dumas passed by, in *his* pleasant Southern travels over the same ground. We get pleasant glimpses and pictures as we follow Mr Sterne lounging it along upon his mule. It was near Beaucaire that the hind

* At Avignon, too, when dismounting, he called in a free-and-easy way to a man at the inn door:— 'Prithee, friend, take hold of my mule for a moment, for I want to pull off one of my jack-boots which hurts my heel;' who calmly did as he was desired, and proved to be a Marquis. Curious to say, just such an adventure befell Mr Smollet a year or two later on *his* travels. But it is worth comparing the delicate tribute to this piece of genuine politeness insinuated by Sterne, and the gruff, surly, growling acknowledgment of his mistake on the part of the Scotchman.

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wheel came off the chaise: it was a sultry day, and about noon, and they were in the midst of a huge plain, some four miles from either tree or shrub. The whole party had to sit in this desert for five hours upon a gravelly road, without a drop of water. The postilions, 'too dough-hearted,' began to cry bitterly over their misfortune. Nothing could be done. 'By Heaven,' said Mr Sterne, stripping off his coat and waistcoat with wonderful energy, 'something *shall* be done, or I'll thrash you both within an inch of your lives.' He made them ride off 'like devils,' to the post for a cart. The travellers had to wait there five hours, under the sun in that sandy spot, until they returned. The roads were swarming with people for the Beaucaire fair. Going or returning, they saw the luckless family sitting at the roadside, with their broken-down chaise, and a mountain of baggage which weighed ten quintals. Every one of the simple peasants stopped a moment to ask them if they were going to the fair. 'No wonder,' quoth Mr Sterne, grumbling *sotto voce*; 'we have goods enough!'

After all was set right again, he went forward on his mule, the 'man with the gun' still

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in front. Mr Sterne lounged on in a truly Shandean fashion. He must have allowed his party to get a post or so in front—a delay to be easily fetched up. He loitered behind, and picked up genuine bits of charming life. He saw the dresses, and decorations, and scenery. He spoke to every one—to the drum-maker, who was making drums for his Beaucaire Fair; to the two Franciscan friars, who were trudging it along, and with whom he turned back for a short way: to the 'gossip,' from whom he bought the Provence figs for four sous, but in the interpretation of which contract a legal difficulty arose in reference to a conveyance of the basket also—in short, 'joining all parties before me—waiting for every soul behind—hailing all those who were coming through cross roads—arresting all kinds of beggars, pilgrims, fiddlers'—he was always in company; his mule loving society as much as he did, and having always, 'some proposals on his part to offer to every beast he met.' He seems to have found it a delightful pilgrimage. Until he finally glides into that exquisite idyll which begins like a song:—
'Twas on the road betwixt Nismes and Lunel, where there is the best Muscatto wine

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in all France.' The charming village dance, with Nannette, and the pipe of the lame youth, ringing musically in our ears, brings us in softly to the old red-brick town of Toulouse, and to the end of his journey.

IN THE SOUTH OF FRANCE



CHAPTER III

IN THE SOUTH OF FRANCE

AT Paris he had made a friend of a half French, half Irish Priest, the Abbé Mackarty, who took immense pains in furnishing him with hints for his journey — kindness which Mr Sterne thoughtfully acknowledged by commissioning Mrs Sterne to bring over a watch-chain for him ('twill be a present worth a kingdom to him,' said he). The Abbé did not allow his kindness to stop there, but knowing something of Toulouse, found out a residence for them, and planned all their expenses. Mr Sterne seems to have been very grateful, and wrote to his friends of these little kindnesses.

They were lodged delightfully, just outside the town, in a stately house, elegant, charmingly furnished, built in the form of a hotel, with a court in front, and opening behind on pretty gardens laid out in serpentine walks,

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and considered the finest in the place. These grounds were so large and so much admired, that all the ladies and gentlemen of that quarter used to come and promenade there on the autumn evenings, and were made welcome. Inside, there were a fine dining-room and a spacious reception-room — ‘quite as good as Baron d’Holbach’s at Paris;’ three handsome bedrooms with dressing-rooms, and two good rooms below, dedicated to Yorick — where he wrote his adventures. There were cellars in abundance. Mr Sterne was in raptures with it all — revelled in his *seigneurie* of such a mansion — thought it only ‘too good by half for us;’ but felt comfort in the wonderfully moderate rent — only thirty pounds a year! For this modest rent, too, his landlord, M. Sligniac, was to ‘keep up’ the gardens. Nay, there was a pretty country house not far off — an old chateau, with a pavilion attached to it — where Mr Sterne used also to write his *Shandys*, and which he christened ‘Don Pringello’s,’ in compliment to one of the Crazy Castle set — and which M. Sligniac allowed him to use, all included in the same modest amount! Something of this is to be accounted for the cheapness of

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the times. Even forty years ago, such charming retreats on the edge of a French provincial town were to be secured by the economic stranger. But something, too, I suspect, must be placed to the account of the tenant's pleasant ways.

The whole establishment was organised in a few days. Mr Sterne loved to revel in his new housekeeping. They had an excellent cook, a *femme-de-chambre*, and 'a good-looking *laquais*.' He found out that they could live 'for very very little.' Wood was the only thing dear; and by-and-by they found that keeping a capital table, two hundred and fifty pounds would be their whole yearly expenditure. He at once put himself on a course of ass's milk three times a day, and began to get strong again.

For the first fortnight or so, he missed his Paris friends, and wrote home a little dimly. Some letters, too, from his Epicurean friend Hall, set him longing to be back again: and made him maunder out regrets and fears, in a lament of worse than his average French. '*Ce sera là*' (at Crazy Castle) '*où reposera ma cendre — et se sera là où mon cousin viendra repondre les pleurs dues a notre amitie.*' But

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he soon began to recover his spirits.—talked boastfully ‘of giving the blue devils a drubbing’—and, as usual, began to make plenty of friends. He was dining with Mr Hewit a few days after he arrived, and before long knew everybody. It was gay enough. For the Countess Fumel and M. Bonrepos ‘received’ nearly every night of the week. The old President D’Orbesson kept a hospitable table—‘*donne toujours à manger,*’ wrote the little scandal-mongers of the place, ‘*et vit toujours avec Mme. La Garse.*’

About the end of September ‘an epidemic vile fever’ visited Toulouse, and swept away hundreds. Mr Sterne, just then getting restored, was seized, and was very nearly ‘journeying on to the other world.’ It clung to him for six weeks, during which time he was in the hands of the Toulouse faculty, ‘the errantest of all the charlatans in Europe, or the most ignorant of all pretending fools.’ They had all but sent him travelling down the valley of the great Shadow, when it occurred to him to dispense altogether with their aid, and leave his cure to ‘*Dame Nature,*’ who, ‘*dear goddess, has saved me fifty different pinching bouts.*’ This impunity, he told the

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lord of Crazy Castle, was at last beginning to make him think that he was to 'leave you all by translation, and not by fair death.' Nothing indeed could damp that wonderful spirit which made up for a miserable constitution, and which made him joyously chant *poculum elevatum* when barely convalescent; '*et cela etant*,' he sings from his pavilion, to Hall Stevenson, in his incorrigible French, 'having a bottle of Frontiniac and glass at my right hand, I drink, dear Antony, to thy health and happiness.'

By the middle of October he was 'stout and foolish again, as a happy man can wish to be,' and had actually finished his next *Shandy* volume. He had dashed in his travels, as it were, at a white heat, and was painting in Uncle Toby's loves with great delight. He was meditating, too, schemes of 'other works;'—no doubt a dusky hint of the *Sentimental Journey*. There is room indeed to suspect that the seventh volume of *Tristram Shandy* was this 'other work;'—the first portion of a *Sentimental Journey* commenced, and abandoned for the present. It is likely that he began at once with my Uncle Toby's amours, and, being later pressed for copy, had

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thrown in his unfinished travels as a make-weight. It will be seen at a glance that these travels belong properly to the *Sentimental Journey*, and beyond that violent and improbable introduction of Uncle Toby and Trim into the cathedral at Auxerre—clearly done as a link—have nothing to do with the adventures of *Tristram*.

For the moment, he had got tired of the provincial town. The place was not to his taste, though about as good as any town in the south of France; but he lays his disgust principally to the account of the ‘eternal platitude of the French character.’ He, too, was sick of the local parliament and its wrangles. ‘If I do not mind,’ he said, ‘I shall grow most stupid and sententious’ by mere contagion. His daughter, however, relished her new life much, and with masters in music, dancing and French, was rapidly adapting herself to the new country.

Already he was looking forward to leaving as soon as the winter was over. He had said that they should all set out for Baréges or Bagnières, and after taking the waters, of which there can be no question he had serious need, he proposed returning home. Mrs

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Sterne, however, wished to stay another year, 'to save money;' and this 'opposition of wishes,' said Mr Sterne, 'though it will not be as sour as lemon, yet 'twill not be as sweet as sugar candy.' Still he took this opposition good-humouredly. 'My dear wife,' he said, 'is against all schemes of additional expense, which wicked propensity (though not of despotic power) yet I cannot suffer. But she may talk, I will do my own way, and she will acquiesce without a word of debate upon the subject. Who can say so much in praise of his wife? few, I trow.' At the moment this debate was going on there was 'bitter cold weather,' going on for fourteen days together, which has obliged us to 'sit with whole fagots of wood lighted up to our noses.' Snow was on the ground, and by the time the winter was over, he was complaining of agues and the moisture. It does therefore seem a little unreasonable in Mrs Sterne to seek to detain her delicate husband another winter at such a place, even if he deserved pains and penalties for his own act in bringing them there. And it must be borne in mind that the Pyrenees, where was the spot he wished to go to, was actually in sight.

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He had an invaluable banker up at Paris, Mr Foley, of the firm of Panchaud & Foley, who was to him more as a warm friend than a mere banker. This was but the natural operation of Mr Sterne's delightful art of attaching strangers. M. Brousse was the correspondent at Toulouse, and by-and-by, in spite of that marvellous cheapness, Mr Foley had to remit very frequently through M. Brousse. The banker was the intimate of Baron d'Holbach, their common friend. Down at Toulouse also was a Mrs M—— (who may have been that Mrs Meadows who turns up later in England), whom Mr Foley also knew, with whom Mr Sterne used to dine. The Hewits were still there; M. Tollot, his Paris friend, was not; but Sterne heartily wished he could lead Sir Charles down. Mr Woodhouse, 'an amiable, worthy man,' was also there, on his road to Italy. They had altogether a very pleasant, lively, noisy little *coterie* — a sort of 'happy society, living together like brothers and sisters.' They met every night together, 'fiddling, laughing, and singing, and cracking jokes.'

Towards Christmas, his friends the Hewits came on a visit to him, and the lively host

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was presently organising a pleasant entertainment suited to the season. 'You will scarce believe the news I tell you,' he wrote gravely to his friend Foley; 'there are a company of English strollers arrived here, who are to act comedies all the Christmas, and are now busy in making dresses and preparing some of our best comedies.' He was, in fact, getting up amateur theatricals with Mrs M——, his daughter, and others of his society, 'to whom,' he adds in his mysterious French, 'I proposed this scheme *soulagement*.' They 'did very well.' They had 'a grand orchestra,' and for the first performance Mr Sterne selected 'The Busy Body,' and 'The Journey to London.' Should we not like to see the play-bill of those Toulouse theatricals? He spoke of adapting 'The Journey to London' to their own adventures, and calling it 'The Journey to Toulouse.' We can scarcely speculate as to the part he would have chosen for himself in this last play, but in 'The Busy Body,' Marplot would have fitted him exactly, and he would have played it delightfully.

The winter passed by, and it came to the end of March when he went on a visit to his friend Hewit, who lived in the country not

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very far away. From that house he wrote to that 'honest soul,' Mr. Foley, dating his letter from 'Toulouse. 'Though that's a mistake,' he begins oddly, 'I mean the date of the place.' His letters to this gentleman were now pretty regularly pitched in the one key. He was wanting remittances through 'Messrs Brousse & Sons.' He had not 'five louis to vapour with in this land of coxcombs. My wife's compliments.' He is visiting 'Messrs Brousse & Sons' every post day this last fortnight. 'When a man has no more than a half-dozen guineas in his pocket, and a thousand miles from home, and in a country where he can as soon raise the Devil as a six livres piece to go to market with, you cannot envy my situation. God bless you; remit me the balance.' 'Poverty of spirit,' he wrote again, 'is worse than poverty of purse by ten thousand per cent.,' and incloses a draft for a hundred and thirty pounds, which he requires to be cashed by return of post, or he will send 'you and all your commissions to the D——l. I don't hear that they have tasted one fleshy banquet all this Lent. You will make an excellent *grille*. As for Panchaud, they can make nothing of him but *Bouillon*.'

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By April he had already settled on leaving for Bagnières. About the beginning of June he was to 'decamp like a patriarch' with his whole family, and stay three months. For such an expedition money was wanting, and the raising of these supplies brought about a little misunderstanding between him and his banker which is very characteristic. It was all founded on a mistake, but shows how much he had attached this 'honest soul' to him. 'After all,' he says at the close, 'I heartily forgive you, for you have done me a signal service in mortifying me, and I am determined to grow rich upon it. Adieu, and God send you wealth and happiness.'

It turned out to be a misunderstanding. The banker was overwhelmed with business, and had forgotten the application. He wrote back, hurt at the tone of his friend's letter, enclosing the money, and bidding him never scruple to draw on him for any occasion of the kind. Mr Sterne acknowledged his kindness in a grateful and graceful letter, saying 'I was the best friends with you in the world before my letter had got a league.' Even in that remote part of the world he had made out friends who could be useful

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to him in such an emergency; and a 'Mr R.,' of Montpellier, whom he had never even seen, had sent him a letter of credit for two hundred pounds, which he had then in his desk. 'This good-natured 'Mr R.' Smollett helps us to identify as a Mr Ray, the banker, of Montpellier.

Again Mr Sterne had to write to his Archbishop, setting out a catalogue of his sufferings with a pleasant *bonhomie*, and pleading for an extension of leave, in a style of his own that almost amounts to a fascination. It has been before remarked what an engaging tone he could assume to those who were above him; and these letters are significant proofs of his cordial relation, in spite of secret enemies and open calumny, with his episcopal superior.

TOULOUSE, *May* 7, 1763.

MY LORD, — Though there is little in this part of the world worth giving you an account of, and of myself, perhaps, the least of anything in it, yet bad as the subject is, it is my duty to say something about it, and your Grace, for that reason, I am sure, will bear with the trouble.

IN THE SOUTH OF FRANCE

It was this time twelve months that I thought myself so far recovered, that I was preparing to return home, when the attention to my daughter's health, who had had an increase of an asthma under which she had lingered some time, determined my route otherwise; as an original weakness of lungs was her case as well as my own, I thought it just to give the daughter the same chance for her life which had saved her father's. Of this I wrote y^r Grace a letter, but had scarce sent it to the post, when (from what cause I know not, except the extreme weakness of the organ) I broke a vessel in my lungs, w^{ch} could not be closed till I had almost bled to death; so that to the motives of going with my daughter into the south of France, I had that superadded—my own immediate preservation; accordingly I have been fixed here with my family these ten months, and by God's blessing it has answered all I wished for, with regard to my daughter; I cannot say so much for myself, having since the first day of my arrival here been in a continual warfare with agues, fevers, and physicians—the 1st brought my blood to so poor a state, that the physicians

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found it necessary to enrich it with strong bouillons, and strong bouillons and soups a santé threw me into fevers, and fevers brought on loss of blood, and loss of blood agues — so that as *war begets poverty, poverty peace*, etc. etc. — has this miserable constitution made all its revolutions; how many more it may sustain, before its last and great one, God knows — like the rest of my species, I shall fence it off as long as I can. I am advised now to try the virtues of the waters of Banyars, and shall encamp like a patriarch w^h my whole household upon the side of the Pyreneans, this summer and winter at Nice; from whence in spring I shall return home, never, I fear, to be of service, at least as a preacher. I have preached too much, my Lord, already; and was my age to be computed either by the number of sermons I have preached, or the infirmities they have brought upon me, I might be truly said to have the claim of a *Miles emeritus*, and was there a Hotel des Invalides for the reception of such established upon any salutary plain betwixt here and Arabia Felix, I w^d beg your Grace's interest to help me into it — as it is, I rest fully assured in my

IN THE SOUTH OF FRANCE

heart of y^r Grace's indulgence to me in my endeavours to add a few quiet years to this fragment of my life — and with my wishes for a long and a happy one to y^r Grace, I am, from the truest veneration of y^r character, — Your most dutiful servant,

L. STERNE.

By the middle of June they were all at Bagnières. We have not a single line* to record their doings at that watering-place. He expected 'much health and much amusement from the concourse of adventurers from all corners of the earth.' But it did not come up to his expectations, for the following year he spoke contemptuously of its pleasures as compared with those of Scarborough. He had laid out a little expedition from thence over the Pyrenees, and possibly a week in Spain, with a view to materials for his Shandean travels. We know not whether he ever carried out this scheme. We can only regret the loss, for he has been so successful with his French brush: how he would have revelled in the

* [There is one letter from Bagnières. It is printed for the first time in this edition of Sterne. See Letter LXXXVIII.]

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Spanish tints! We have lost chapters that would have been as bright and true in tone as *Gil Blas*.

Later, they went down to Marseilles, and also paid a visit to Aix, neither of which places they liked much. Aix was a 'Parliament town,' and Toulouse had given him a surfeit of such. And to all these places he took with him Mrs Sterne and his Lydia. It was now October, and getting on fast to another winter. His chest admonished him it was time to look out for a sheltered retreat; and there can be no question but that he was yearning for England, and would have gladly gone home in the summer. It is not too much to assume that he had to yield to domestic considerations, either of economy or affection; and that Mrs Sterne, by those silent tactics which he described so pleasantly, had her way. They were determined not to return to Toulouse, and by the 5th of October they were all established at the famous sanatory city of Montpellier.

Montpellier was at this season in high repute for delicate persons, and invalids of all countries fled thither from their own hard winters. It was considered a handsome town,

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‘a magazine of houses ;’ which were more showy inside than out. Socially it was very gay, it having Courts of Justice, ‘*cours souverains*,’ an Intendency, and, above all, the Assembly of the Estates of Languedoc, who met there with all due state. It was, besides, the seat of a military government, and was full of ‘*gens de condition*.’ It was, moreover, famous in France for the special attraction of its women. There reigned here the most delightful absence of all restraint. The natives were noted for their pleasant, easy manners ; their good humour and wit ; and the easy welcome they gave to strangers. It was remarked that even those who were ugly had a certain attraction which it was hard to resist.* A dangerous locality, certainly, for Mr Sterne’s inflammable heart. Strangers were very welcome, and English abounded. There were many parties, and much fashionable high play always going forward.

Strange to say, Mr Sterne did not seem to like it. He was pining for home ; and actually in the first week after his arrival was laying out departing in February for England,

* See Madame Du Noyer’s lively *Lettres Galantes*, tom. i. p. 114.

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‘where my heart has been fled these six months’—then stay a fortnight in Paris—pass on to Brussels—Rotterdam, ‘for the sake of seeing Holland’ (*materiel* for a book of travels)! and ‘embark from thence to London.’ This was five or six months before he could hope to depart, and with exactly such castle-building had he entertained himself during his first visit at Toulouse. At this time, too, he was tempted by an offer of going to Italy, in the quality of what he has called ‘Bear Leader,’ but he did not like either the terms that were proposed, or the bear he was to lead.

His Toulouse friend, Mr Hewit, was also at Montpellier. But a very agreeable variety was produced by the arrival of some Paris friends, and that M. Tollot, who he had hoped ‘would bring Sir Charles’ to Toulouse. This gentleman, who seems to have always had a genuine kindness for him, was delighted to meet again ‘*le bon et agréable* Tristram,’ as he called him, and stayed nearly a fortnight. They talked together over future plans, and M. Tollot drew a pleasant picture of future amusements together—how they were to find Mr Sterne a room at their hotel in Paris—

IN THE SOUTH OF FRANCE

how there was to be a cover regularly laid for him each day — how they were to be joined by Hall Stevenson, and travel home to England together. Mr Sterne entered into the scheme warmly, and, as will be seen, when passing through Paris, went and stayed with them as proposed.

Monsieur Tollot also talked a good deal with the Hewits, and they told him some particulars about Mr Sterne's Toulouse life. '*Le bon et agréable* Tristram,' with all his lively gifts, was naturally made welcome everywhere; but poor Mrs Sterne, perhaps not so *recherché*, would pursue him everywhere. She clung to him tenaciously — '*Elle voulait être de tout*,' says the Frenchman who tells the story. Nothing affords such wicked delight to French society as a nuptial exhibition of this sort — it gives occasion to all manner of smart sayings. But Mr Sterne accepted his wife's pursuit, which is reported to have made him pass '*d'assez mauvais momens*,' with 'the patience of an angel.'* This letter is not of much moment, nor indeed of much dignity in a historical sense; yet still it has some little value, for without disparaging Mrs Sterne,

* Mr Cooper's *Seven Letters of Sterne*.

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who, after all, meant well, it shows him as a good-humoured as well as a sensible husband.

That winter nearly passed by. He got over the Christmas in tolerable health, and on the fifth of January was writing a kind, warm letter to his friend Mr Foley, chiding him for not writing 'even a single line, be it only to tell me how your watch goes,' which he left unfinished on his desk and then went out for a ride towards Pezenas. Yorick was always destined to be unlucky in his horses. Coming home, his beast broke down and refused to stir. 'He was as immovable as Don Quixote's wooden horse, and my arm was dislocated whipping him. "This," quoth I, "is inhuman." "No," says a peasant on foot behind me, "I'll drive him home." So he laid on his posteriors, but 'twas needless; as his face was turned towards Montpellier he began to trot.' The result was that Mr Sterne returned home in an aguish fever, which kept him ten days in his bed, and the unfinished letter was not despatched until the fifteenth. . . . He was low-spirited after this, and seems to have suffered terribly in what he forcibly calls 'this scuffle with death.' He adds that 'unless the spirit of prophecy deceive me, I shall

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not die, but live,' and then breaks into a very remarkable declaration, — 'In the meantime, dear Foley, let us live as merrily but as innocently as we can. *It has ever been as good, if not better, than a Bishopric to me — and I desire no other.*'

About this time he wrote to his publisher Becket, being anxious about the moneys that were due to him.

'I wrote my last letter to you from hence with so much haste, that I forgot the principal thing I had in my Intention, and which I had in a former letter desired you to be so good as to inform me about — I mean what is the real state of our accounts; or in other words, how many sets of *Shandy* you have got off to Booksellers and others since the 7th of last April. I am much obliged to you for your leave to let me draw upon you for the Summ you mentioned — but should be infinitely more easy to know how much you have in your hands of mine. Wherefore dear sir favour me with an exact state of this — for tho' tis more a matter of Curiosity than any Thing else — Yet I would rather have it satisfied now than 3 months hence when I

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shall see you and have all things in course settled. . . .’ etc.*

By-and-by more English arrived. Lord Rochford, passing through on his way to Italy, made him a call, and told him how Mr Fox — ‘my worthy friend,’ Mr Sterne calls him — was then in Paris, and how the gay metropolis was almost full of English. His health was mending slowly, and his physicians, after treating him ineffectually, suddenly informed him, almost to his amusement, ‘If you stay any longer here, sir, it will be fatal to you.’ ‘And why, good people,’ answered the patient, naturally enough, ‘were you not kind enough to tell me this sooner?’

‘This treatment was indeed barbarous, and reads like a bit of Molière. Anything more ludicrously inefficient for a consumptive patient cannot be conceived. They almost poisoned him with a succession of what they called *bouillons rafraichissants*, the elements of which were ‘a cock *flayed* alive, and boiled with poppy seeds, these pounded in a mortar, afterwards passed through a sieve.’ There was besides to

* It is evidence of the rarity of Sterne autographs, that this letter was priced in the catalogue at £23.

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be present one crawfish, which should be a male one. This was *de rigueur*, a female crawfish being likely to be fatal! This precious composition must have been devised specially for the English, and for that malady of '*consomption*' which we are told was peculiar to them. There can be no question but that the physician who prescribed this primitive nostrum for Mr Sterne, was the same M. F—— whom Smollett consulted when he visited Montpellier the following year. It is the most amusing passage in his travels. He was indeed an arrant charlatan, and Mrs Sterne, comparing notes with the Scotch physician at Toulouse, told him of an unhappy English youth named Oswald, son to a merchant, who had fallen a victim to their caprices. The young man, in the last stage of consumption, took his *bouillons rafraichissants* for above a month with the worst results; and on his complaining was told precisely as Mr Sterne had been told, — 'Sir, the air of this place is too sharp for your lungs.' 'Then,' said the other, 'you are a sordid villain to have kept me here.' He went to Toulouse, where he died in a few weeks.

Mr Sterne, when he had received this cheer-

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ing notice from his physicians, told Mrs Sterne that he must return home at once ; and it is plain that here was a text for another unpleasant matrimonial discussion as to the point of residence ; which ended in each party resolving to go their own road. Mrs Sterne was determined to stay two or three years more in France, in which ‘I am truly passive,’ says he — with the exception that he would rather have his daughter with him in England.

He looked forward with delight to the idea of getting home, for he was heartily tired of provincial France. The States of Languedoc were already met at Montpellier, ‘a fine raree show, with the usual accompaniments of fiddlers, bears, and puppet-shows ;’ of which spectacle, too, Miss Knight has left us an admirable photograph ; but it had no attraction for him. He will fly from them with alacrity ; and, except for grief of losing her whom he calls ‘my little slut,’ he will step into his chaise in high spirits. ‘Every step towards England he fancied will help to put his poor frame to rights.’ It needed repair sadly. But Mrs Sterne had her way. The plea was the health of her daughter. He was most earnest in his wish to have them with him ; as, indeed, it

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seems to have been his wish to the last. She selected Montauban for her place of abode, a little town close to Toulouse, which also boasted its 'little senate' and provincial '*haute volée*' of the Sword and Gown.

PARIS

CHAPTER IV

PARIS

MR STERNE was now back again in Paris. He stayed, as was arranged, at M. Tollot's hotel in the Quartier St Honoré, where he found 'good and generous souls.' From Paris he wrote to his 'dear Lydia' one of those warm, affectionate letters which are delightful to read. He sends her down a little present of books — *Spectators* and *Metastasio*; 'but I beg my girl,' writes the father, 'to read the former, and only make the latter her amusement.' He also sent her a guitar, and tells her good-humouredly not to go on with the drawing, as 'you have no genius for it, though you never could be made to believe it.' He reminds her of his 'last request,' which was to make no friendship with the 'French women;' not that he thought so badly of them *all*, but he was afraid of her acquiring the false French man-

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ners then in vogue. ‘Nay, I am so jealous of you,’ goes on the fond and careful father, ‘that I should be miserable were I to see you had the least grain of coquetry in your composition.’ The fact was, he already *did* see some few grains, and was fearful lest it should get further developed.

As usual, he found Paris delightful. There were plenty of English, and many Irish and Scotch. Wilkes, staying at the Hôtel de Saxe, Rue Colombier, was laughing loudly with D’Holbach, but at the same time was nervously expecting that sentence of expulsion from the House of Commons which came later. The real Lion of the Hour—just as Garrick had been that of the past year, and Sterne again that of the year before—was David Hume, the new ambassador’s secretary—to the amazement of his friends at home, who only knew him as a correct writer and acute thinker. He was heard of in the gayest, the most exclusive *salons*, with the fairest ladies of the capital, sitting, as it were, at his feet, and listening to Deism, explained in rude limping French.

With him, as well as with Wilkes, Sterne now became acquainted. Of Hume, he heard

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that story which so well illustrates the niceties of the French tongue, and which he afterwards fitted into his *Sentimental Travels*. More likely he himself, 'at our ambassador's table,' had heard 'the prompt French Marquis' ask the secretary if he was Home the poet? 'No,' answered the other mildly. '*Tant pis!*' said the 'prompt French Marquis,' perhaps too promptly. 'It is Hume the historian,' some one then whispered. '*Tant mieux!*' said the Marquis, adroitly, repairing his mistake. 'And Mr Hume, who is a man of an excellent heart, returned thanks for both.' Only a Frenchman could have extricated himself so skilfully. It occurred to him again later, when on his *Sentimental Travels*.

This was the Lord Hertford, who had just returned Wilkes's visit, though the latter was fashionably considered an enemy of king, country, and all good men. He had also just given that wonderful form of attestation as to Wilkes's illness: 'In witness whereof, I have *affixed my hand* and seal,' which was amusing all the English in Paris. There were many Jacobites, too, associating with the English travelling Whigs in the greatest harmony,

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and, among others, the uncle of the Lord of Crazy Castle, and the real *de jure* Lord of Crazy Castle. This was a Mr Laurence Trotter, who had left Skelton Castle in the '45 troubles, and had been compelled, like many other adherents of the fallen cause, to flutter about foreign courts and capitals. He was, however, 'eternally joyous and *jockundissimus*;' and Mr Sterne met him at houses of every shade of politics. He dined with him at Lord Tavistock's; and on another occasion, found him at the table of Lord Beauchamp the ambassador's son. Such happy toleration at a season when the bitterness of home politics was extreme, seems extraordinary.

One Sunday Mr Sterne was invited to preach before the ambassador. On a Sunday in January the little chapel in the Faubourg St Honoré, 'près barrière du Louvre,' had echoed the dull utterances of a Doctor Trail, who wearied Wilkes sadly. But now it was filled to overflowing with the most motley crowd. It may be questioned if it ever held such a congregation; there were all nations, believers and unbelievers, Humes, Diderots, D'Holbachs, all gathered to hear famous Par-

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son Yorick. The sermon was worthy of the occasion, and was perhaps the strangest of all his strange sermons. He selected Hezekiah ('an odd subject you and mother will say,' he wrote to Lydia) — and giving out the following text — '*And he said, What have they seen in thine house? And Hezekiah answered, All the things that are in mine house have they seen: there is nothing among all my treasures that I have not showed them*' — startled the audience with — 'And where was the harm, you'll say, in all this?'

He then proceeded to explain the whole story, in a pleasant discourse, admirable in style, and very practical in tone. Nothing can be more admirable than his remarks on the motive of human actions.

'There is scarce anything which the human heart bears worse than an analysis of this kind.

'We are a strange compound; and something foreign from what charity would suspect, so eternally twists itself into what we do, that not only in momentous concerns where interest lists under it all the powers of disguise, but even in the most indifferent of our actions *not worth a fallacy*, by force

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of habit we continue it. So that whatever a man is about, observe him — he stands armed inside and out with two motives, an ostensible one for the world, and another which he reserves for his own private use ; this, you will say, the world has no concern with — it might have been so ; but by obtruding the wrong motive upon the world, and stealing from it a character, instead of winning one, we give it a right, and a temptation along with it, to inquire into the affair.' He then, with a delicate and dramatic touch, deals with the motives which govern the ordinary hypocrisies of life. La Rochefoucault had preached on the same text before. 'Is it that the principles of religion want strength, or that the real passion for which is good and worthy will not carry us high enough? God! *thou knowest they carry us too high — we want not to be, but to seem. Look out of your door, take notice of that man: see what disquieting, intriguing, and shifting he is content to go through, merely to be thought a man of plain dealing! three grains of honesty would save him all this trouble.*

‘Another, going on almost in the same track. With what an inflexible sanctity of de-

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portment he sustains himself as he advances ; *every line in his face writes abstain, every stride looks like a check upon his desires ;* see, I beseech you, how he is cloak'd up with sermons and prayers, etc. Is there no serving God without all this ? Must the garb of *religion be extended so wide to the danger of its rending ?* Yes, truly, it will not hide the secret ; and what is that ? That the saint has no religion at all.'

The broken, scattered manner in which it is printed, gives us a hint of the dramatic fashion in which it was delivered. The questions, pauses, and the very look of the preacher must have made it a very original performance ; not one of his little portraits, too, but would have formed a counterpart in the great vortex of Parisian society ; and touched a chord among his motley audience.

It was altogether a curious homily, and must have entertained the ambassador and his congregation marvellously. Remarkable, too, in another sense. For he had determined it was to be the last occasion of his ascending the pulpit. Either the exertion, or the agitation, or both together, brought on the old attack — a vessel in his lungs gave way once

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more, and he nearly 'bled to death.' This was sufficient. Yet he was to preach once more before he died — not before an ambassador, but before a king.

Again, too, had the sentimental heart of Yorick become enchained; and a new charmer, of whose name we are in ignorance, restored him once more to that blissful state which, he was persuaded, always secured him against any mean or pitiful action.* He tells the whole history with an unrestrained confidence, which shows he considered that Mr Yorick's *amourettes* were fairly the property of the public, and nothing to be ashamed of. 'All which being premised,' he wrote to his friend Hall, 'I have been for eight weeks smitten with the tenderest pains that ever human wight underwent. I wish, dear cousin, thou could'st conceive (perhaps thou can'st, without my wishing it), how deliciously I cantered away with it the first month — two up, two down — always upon my haunches along the street, from my hotel to hers — at first once, then twice, then three times a day — *until at length I was within an ace of setting up my*

* Could this be the first appearance of 'Eliza'? She must have come from India to England about this time. [At this time "Eliza" was in India. She came to England in 1765.]

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hobby-horse in her stable for good and all. I might as well, considering how the enemies of the Lord have blasphemed thereupon. The last three weeks we were every hour upon the doleful ditty of parting — and, my dear cousin, how it altered my gait and air — for I came and went like any condemn'd carl, and did nothing but mix tears and *jouer des sentiments* with her from sun rising to the setting of the same ; and now she is gone to the south of France.' This affair could not have been very serious, as he was already talking with complacency of his departure for London : — They had lived, he owns, 'shag-rag and bobtail, all of us, a most jolly, nonsensical life of it.'

He started on Thursday, about the middle of May,* and was in London about the twenty-ninth, and put up in John Street, with his friends the Thornhills. He was also a good deal in and about the environs. His friend Foley came to London when he was there, but by some fatality they never met, and were 'like the two buckets in a well ;' and by the first week in August he was back again in York, after an absence of about two years and four months.

* [May 24.]

AT HOME AGAIN

CHAPTER V

AT HOME AGAIN

HIS Archbishop, as we have seen, was indulgent, and seems to have given him unlimited indulgence as to leave of absence. Mr Sterne was now a little scared about his health, and actually, before he had been home a month, proclaimed to his Paris friends that he was seized with a cough ; which if it held him three days, they would certainly see him in Paris the week following — for ‘now,’ he added, ‘I abandon everything in this world to health and to my friends. So I am altogether an idle man, or rather a free one, which is better.’

Idle as he was, he had taken the trouble of sending money ‘last post’ to his wife,* and of

* From February to November Mrs Sterne’s ‘account’ seems to have stood thus : —

Feby. in hand,	.	.	.	.	£100	0	0
Aug. 6, “	.	.	.	.	20	0	0
Sept. 29, “	.	.	.	.	50	0	0
Nov. 16, “	30	0	0

But it is plain from the letters that more was sent than this amount.

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remitting more to Mr Foley. And in that letter he begins a series of remittances and a series of thoughtful directions for insuring that Mrs Sterne should be always well supplied with money. Nothing can be more persevering, more ceaseless, than his injunctions on this head, at home or abroad. In the hurry of his travels he never forgets them. ‘Betwixt this and Ladyday next, Mrs S. will draw from time to time upon you for about the amount of a hundred louis. . . . But you shall always have money of mine upon hand . . . and she proposes to spend no more than 5000 livres in the year; — but twenty pound this way or that makes no difference between us.’ From this time forth, all his letters were full of the same injunction — which are not insisted on here, as proofs of any unusual affection — but of a careful thoughtfulness quite opposed to the neglectful character that has been made for him.

It will be seen later how marvellous it was, that the distorted tale of the careless, neglectful husband should have ever got abroad. There are a hundred little scraps of evidence, sufficient not merely to refute such a story, but to establish for him — absent as well as

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present — the character of a kind, careful, *thoughtful* husband. Even for the sake of his daughter he would not have neglected her, and tried by that vile, but substantial, test of affection — money, which he was always sadly in need of himself — he comes out triumphantly.

By the first week in September he was still busy with the chronicles of ‘my Uncle Toby’s amours.’ He was getting on but slowly, for the weather was beautiful — and ‘there is no sitting and cudgelling one’s brains while the sun shines bright.’ The dull season of October, which Edgar Poe sang of, was at hand, ‘and ’twill be all over in six or seven weeks, and there are dismal months enow after, to endure suffocation by a brimstone fireside.’ He was lonely enough at his Coxwould hearth; and he was thinking of leaving ‘a few poor sheep in the wilderness for fourteen days,’ and hurrying off to Scarborough, even then a gay watering-place. He wrote to his friend Stevenson to join him there; ‘for a man who makes six tons of alum a week may do anything.’

It will be recollected how, a couple of years before, he had written from Paris to the Arch-

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bishop in favour of his Coxwould curate, Mr Kilner. In that letter he was guarded in his testimony, owing to the short time during which he himself had personal knowledge of the curate's behaviour. Later he seems, with true Shandean carelessness, to have signed some more general testimonial ; which covered a period beyond Mr Sterne's own knowledge. And this appears to have displeased his superior ; who yet might have recollected the careful way in which Mr Sterne had before guarded himself on this very point.

‘ COXWOULD, *Oct.* 30, 1764.*

‘ MY LORD, — I know not whether I did do right or wrong in signing the testimonial of Mr Kilner, my curate's, behaviour for three years, during the greatest part of which time I was in another country and could know nothing at all of the matter ; but I believed your Grace's good temper would give the only good interpretation it could admit of, and that all I meant was to certify for his morals and good behaviour for the little time I knew him before I went abroad, and for the few months I

* In 1891 there was sold at Sotheby's, an agreement with a curate of his, Mr John Walker, who was to ‘serve’ Stillington at £40 a year.

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have been with him since my return. I had this, moreover, to have added that he came well recommended ; that his character in this parish is very good, and that the man is well liked as a quiet and an honest man, and withal as a good reader and preacher — I think him so myself — and had it not been impertinent to speak to a point, of which your Grace is this moment going to be a judge, I believe him a good scholar also — I do not say a graceful one — for his bodily presence is mean ; and were he to stand for Ordination before a Popish Bishop, the poor fellow would be disabled by a Canon in a moment.

‘ I beg a thousand pardons of y^r Grace for taking the liberty of saying a word more upon this than I had strictly occasion for, the whole purport of my letter being simply this — “to assure your Grace I had no intent of deceiving you ;” I am sure I could have no interest, for by long and obstinate coughs, and unaccountable hemorrhages in my lungs, and a thorough relaxation of the organ (or something worse) in consequence of them. I am foretold by the best physicians, both in France and here, that ’twill be fatal to me to preach ; indeed, nature tells me I have no powers, and the last

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poor experiment I made in preaching at the Ambassador's chapel at Paris (tho' no larger than y^r Grace's dining-room), had liked to have fulfill'd their predictions — for w^{ch} reason, as I cannot discharge my duty myself, 'tis the more incumbent on me to have it unexceptionably done by others.

‘I beg pardon, my Lord, once more, for giving you this trouble ;

‘And wish your Grace very truly and cordially many many years of good health, without all this anxiety to preserve it.

‘I am, with duty and esteem,

‘Y^r Grace's most faithful servant,

‘LAU. STERNE.’

At Scarborough he found Lord Granby, Lord Shelburne, and many more. The races were going on, and he remained to drink the waters for about three weeks. This would have really been of service to his health, did not his ‘playing the good fellow’ with his noble friends impair it as fast as he improved it. Mr Stevenson had gone to Harrogate with Sir Charles Danvers, and others ‘of the jolly set,’ whom Mr Sterne for a moment thought of joining after his Scarborough cam-

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paign. But instead, he returned to his 'Philosophical Hut,' and sat down steadily to work at *Tristram*, and have it ready for the winter.

He had just heard from Mrs Sterne, with an application for money. He wrote to his banker at once — 'as her purse *is low, for God's sake write directly.*' She was now at Montauban, and wrote also in much distress about a hint which the Montauban banker had dropped in reference to her 'being separated for life' from Mr Sterne. He, too, was annoyed at such a rumour, for all their sakes (the tattle of an obscure French provincial town could not affect him), and he wrote kindly and earnestly to Mr Foley: 'Now this is not true in the first place, and *may give a disadvantageous impression* of her.'

By November he had his regular *Tristram* instalment ready for the press. He had also conceived the idea of writing sermons for publication, since he could no longer preach what he published; — a step to which the success of Mr Yorick's dramatic discourses might well tempt him: for by the year of his death they had 'cantered,' as he himself would say, through no less than nine editions. He wrote to his Paris friends in high satisfaction with

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his work. 'You will read as comical a tour through France,' he said to Foley, 'as ever was projected or executed by traveller or travel-writers since the world began. Panchaud will enjoy it. I am quite civil to your Parisians, *et pour cause*, you know. I may see them in the spring.' In the same letter he thinks of Mrs Sterne: 'If she should have occasion before Christmas for fifty Louis, let her not wait a minute.' In a few days after, fearful of some mistake or delay through his banker having no funds to his credit, he forwards from York one hundred pounds. At this time, too, he was very busy, it being 'Church militant week,' and the old business of enclosing Stillington common having cropped up again, he was much worried by all 'the marches and countermarches' ecclesiastical, attendant on this proceeding; but, as usual, found a solace in two young ladies who were staying at the same country house in the neighbourhood—a couple of romping girls (*bien mises et comme il faut*), who would come rushing in upon him, and gave his 'judgment many more airings than they wanted.' Altogether, he was beginning to be reconciled to his lonely 'Philosophical Hut;' but it was

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more from an anticipation of a London Christmas, and the old notion of a tour in Italy, which he was beginning to turn over in his mind. Soothed by this complacent prospect, he could afford to philosophise over his 'sweet retirement; wherever we go we must bring three parts in four of this treat along with us; in short, we must be happy within, and few things without us make much difference.' We need only read M. Tollot's description of this 'happy mortal' to see that there was no dreamy speculation, and that no one, in truth, ever so handsomely 'brought three parts in four of the treat' with him in return for his entertainment.

As it came close on Christmas he was away to London with his wares. They did not appear until the 26th of January, 1765, when the usual stereotyped advertisements appeared in the *St James's Chronicle*, the *Public Ledger*, and other journals: 'This day were published, price 4s., sewed, vols. 7 & 8 of the *Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman*, by the author of the former volumes.'

They were a very thin instalment, and did not exhibit much industry; and abstracting what I have called his first Sentimental Jour-

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ney, the rest is devoted entirely to the history of Captain Shandy's love. This episode, more continuous and unbroken than anything he had yet done, might take rank beside any of the best Shandean pictures. It was welcomed with delight, and in spite of some coarse touches here and there, which the perverse infatuation of the author would introduce, will charm generations to come. But the other portions were disfigured by a burst of more than usual grossness, and a coarse licence utterly inexcusable. The old compliment of the English Rabelais, which now in Paris had rung often in his ears, had seduced him into this excess; and the companionship of such men as Wilkes and Crebillon would not be likely to purify his taste. Even the low jest which supports the *Andouillets* story is said to have been taken from a common French jest-book, and could have been told by any French driver or ostler. And yet it is plain that he was insensible to those improprieties, and to the last believed he was fixing himself more securely in the 'easy chair' of the English Rabelais.

But much of the responsibility—as was insisted on before—rests upon the shoulders of

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that public who bought and read and subscribed. ‘*Shandy* sells well,’ was the only shape of protest that found its way to him. But when, a few months later, everything that was aristocratic, brilliant, and intellectual in England rushed to subscribe; and sermons preached by the man who preached of the Abbess of Andouillets, came ‘prancing’ into the world endorsed literally by the whole peerage of the country: in what light was such testimony to be accepted, save as encouragement, or at least tacit approval? Even the critical organs remonstrated gently, rather than condemned. And his old enemy, the *Monthly Review*, in a strange, bantering article, cast in the shape of a dialogue, while affecting to reprove only threw an air of burlesque over all.

As usual, Mr Sterne flung himself with enthusiasm into the heart of London delights. The old round of ‘dinners, a fortnight deep,’ set in with fury. He found a few seconds to write a line or two to Garrick, then being made a ‘Lion’ of at Paris; and to whom, in all his triumphs, have drifted over disquieting stories of the new actor Powell—the young clerk, who stepped from his desk to the stage, and whom all London was rushing to admire.

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Mr Sterne had been frequently to see him, and had frequently taken the whole party where he had been dining, to the box which Mr Garrick's liberality had furnished him. He balanced the account thus: 'I am sometimes in my friend Garrick's house, but he is always in Tristram Shandy's;' and truly the heavier obligation was on the actor's side.

Very steady was Mr Sterne in this friendship. We can see how nervous he was growing about the danger from the new actor's hold upon the town. Most delicately does he hint to his friend the necessity of his prompt return. 'O, how I congratulate you for the anxiety the world continues to be under, for your return. Return, return to the few who love you, and the thousands who admire you. *The moment you set your foot upon your stage*—mark! I tell it you—by some magic irresistible power, every fibre about your heart will vibrate afresh. . . . Powell! good Heaven!—give me some one with less smoke and more fire. There are who, like the Pharisees, still think they shall be heard for much speaking. Come—come away—my dear Garrick, and teach us another lesson.'

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He always admired Mrs Garrick — the beautiful Violette: and the terms in which he used to write to Garrick of his lady, shows what has been insisted on all through this book — that all the world understood him perfectly, and that he had a sort of special privilege to *jouer les sentimens* with any lady he pleased. ‘My Minerva,’ he styles her, ‘full rapturously will I lead her to the temple, — but you may worship with me or not; ’twill make no difference either in the truth or warmth of my devotion. Still, after all I have seen, I still maintain her peerless. . . . Adieu. I love you dearly, *and your lady better — not hobbi-horsically, but most sentimentally and affectionately.*’ And Mrs Garrick, who exercised a strange fascination over all who came within her circle, had ‘a real regard for him,’ and often freely reprovèd him for his faults.*

Mr Cradock, the amateur actor and dramatist, once met him behind the scenes at Drury Lane, and found him in very low spirits. He suggested to him — what any one familiar with the dramatic power of his writings would long to suggest — that he

* Cradock’s Memoirs. [Consult “Sterne and the Theatre” in *Letters and Miscellanies.*]

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“I will grant the request of this poor widow, lest by her continual coming she weary me.”
‘Why, Sterne,’ said one of the company, ‘you have left out the most applicable bit of the whole — “Though I fear not God, nor regard man.”’ It is said the retort silenced Mr Sterne for the rest of the evening.*

The jesters of society — specially those who forget the cloth they wear — very often expose themselves to these free personalities. For the clerical Tom Hood, there is always an absence of reverence. Even his friend Mr Garrick could not resist a severe remark at his expense. Once, when Sterne was declaiming loudly against some one who had neglected his wife, and saying he should be hung up at his own door, the actor, thinking of Mrs Sterne left behind in Yorkshire, said slyly, ‘Sterne, you live *in lodgings!*’ †

By April his London campaigning was over, and he had gone down to Bath to recruit. ‘*Shandy* sells well,’ was still his account of the success of his new volumes. But his sermons,

* *Adams’ Anecdotes*. Though no authority is given, the story is so exact in local details, I have no hesitation in accepting it as true.

† This little anecdote is given in newspapers of the day, but is to be found in many a book of ‘ana.’

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with which he was now 'taxing the public,' were now about going through the press. With these he was trying the now extinct fashion of a subscription list, which he reckoned would double his gains. A more dazzling army of patrons never ushered book into the world — not even Voltaire's *Henriade*. Well might he boast of it as 'the largest and most splendid list that ever pranced before a book, since subscriptions came into fashion.' This roll represented, besides, £300 in money. This was in addition to the sale of the copyright. So that he had indeed made 'a good campaign in the field of the literati,' and 'with all that contempt of money, which "*ma façon de penser*" has ever imposed on me, I shall be rich in spite of myself.' Nor did he forget those who were entitled to share his prosperity, for he sent off £100 to Paris.

It was about this period that he became acquainted with a lady of fashion and influence, 'Lady P——' the wife of Lord Percy,* who lived near Mount Street. For this lady, who was the daughter of the once omnipotent favourite, Lord Bute, Mr Sterne conceived

* She is set down in the letters as Lady P—— ; but there can be no reasonable doubt that it is this Lady Percy who is referred to.

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one of his sentimental passions. One Tuesday evening he was to dine in Wigmore Street, but starting a little earlier than the dinner hour, strayed into the fashionable Mount Coffee House in Mount Street — called for a sheet of gilt-edged paper, and sat down to write a strangely rapturous letter to this very noble lady who lived close by. The letter has been preserved — a monument of Tristram's infatuation. On his gilt sheet of paper he sets out 'what a strange mechanical effect is produced in writing a *billet-doux* within a stone-cast of the lady who engrosses the heart and soul of an innamorato' — that she has made 'a dish-clout of a soul' of him. He complains that he is kept at a distance, and despairs of getting one inch nearer; then breaks out into this extravagant rhapsody:—

'Would not any man in his senses run diametrically from you — and as far as his legs could carry him? — rather than thus causelessly, foolishly, and foolhardily expose himself afresh, etc. . . . Why would you tell me you would be glad to see me? Does it give you pleasure to make me more unhappy — or does it add to your triumph that your eyes

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and lips have turned a man into a fool, whom the rest of the town is courting as a wit? I am a fool — the weakest, the most ductile — the most tender fool that ever woman tried the weakness of — and the most unsettled in my purposes and resolutions of recovering my right mind. It is but an hour ago that I kneeled down and swore I never would come near you — and after saying my Lord's Prayer for the sake of the close, of not being led into temptation — out I sallied like any Christian hero, ready to take the field against the world, the flesh, and the devil; not doubting but I should finally trample them all down under my feet — and now I am got so near you — within this vile stone's-cast of your house — I feel myself drawn into a vortex, that has turned my brain upside downwards, and though I had purchased a box-ticket to carry me to Miss ——'s benefit, yet I know very well, that was a single line directed to me, to let me know Lady —— would be alone at seven, and suffer me to spend the evening with her, she would infallibly see everything verified I have told her. — I dine at Mr C——r's' (Mr Cowper's?) 'in Wigmore Street, in this neighbourhood, where I shall stay till

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seven, in hopes you purpose to put me to this proof. If I hear nothing by that time I shall conclude you are better disposed of — and shall take a sorry hack, and sorrily jogg on to the play — Curse on the word. I know nothing but sorrow — except this one thing, that I love you (perhaps foolishly, but)

‘ Most sincerely, L. STERNE.’

This miserable letter, I think, might be accepted as a picture of the struggle that was going on in his mind all through his life. And it does seem as though some such struggle — ending usually in defeat — was what he suffered from all through. Whether Mr. Sterne spent the evening with the lady, or went off to the play, used his box ticket, and saw Miss —, cannot be known now.* She was unhappily not likely to be too scrupulous in receiving gentlemen: for we can trace her afterwards as the subject of town talk. Many years afterwards came a divorce, and after that, scandal about Sheriff Cotes in Newgate, — altogether a discreditable finish.†

* Of course this Lady P. did not furnish a copy of this epistle. As was before noted, Mr Sterne kept a letter-book with rough drafts of his letters.

† See Selwyn, Walpole, *passim*, and a curious letter in *Nicholl's Anecdotes*.

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By May he was back again at Coxwold, which he began to find not ‘a sweet retirement,’ but ‘a solitude.’ Thus, when sitting in his summer-house correcting his sermons, he found himself drawn out of ‘a pensive mood’ by a letter from his friend Woodhouse — and to that gentleman, putting aside his sermons for a moment, he wrote his *New Art of Love*. ‘In these cases I first endeavour to make the lady believe so — or rather, I begin first to make myself believe that I am in love — but I carry on my affairs quite in the French way, that is, “sentimentally.” “*L’amour*,” say they, “*n’est rien sans le sentiment*.”’ This, indeed, is the true key to all Mr Sterne’s affections. When he could write thus tranquilly of such light topics, he had just met with a serious misfortune, which to one of another temper would have been a very heavy blow.

He had long since handed over his Parsonage at Sutton to a curate, who took charge of that parish. One night, through the carelessness of this curate, or ‘of his wife, or his maid, or some one within his gates,’ it took fire and was burnt to the ground, with all Mr Sterne’s furniture and Mr Sterne’s books, ‘a pretty collection.’ The loss was close on four hundred

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pounds. Mr Sterne goes on with the story — ‘The poor man and his wife took the wings of the next morning and fled away. This has given me real vexation, for so much was my pity and esteem for him, that as soon as I heard of this disaster, I sent to desire that he would come and take up his abode with me till another habitation was ready to receive him; but he was gone, and, as I am told, through fear of my persecution. Heavens! how little did he know of me, to suppose I was among the number of those which heap misfortune upon misfortune. *God, who reads my heart, knows it to be true* — that I wish rather to share than to increase the burden of the miserable as for the dirty trash of this world, I regard it not, the loss of it does not cost me a sigh.’ This is fresh testimony to his goodness of heart, under a trial that would have tried another man’s temper severely; and we can scarcely doubt that solemn appeal. At the moment he wrote, he felt he would be obliged to rebuild the house. ‘But,’ he adds, ‘I lack the means at present, yet I am never happier than when I have not a shilling in my pocket; for when I have, I can never call it my own.’ The name of this

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unlucky curate I have discovered. He was a Mr William Raper, and had been there six years. I find that he stayed with Sterne until the following year, so that his good-natured tolerance of the misfortune was not a mere flourish.* In the same key of good spirits he wrote gaily, and with a lively freedom, to a noble friend of his, Lord Effingham — the same whom that jovial dramatist, Reynolds, knew so intimately. ‘My good lord,’ he began, ‘(for I believe you from my heart to be so, or my pen would not have belied my opinion of you : and since I have begun articles of belief give me leave to add, and I believe you to have power to be anything — but no thanks to you, etc.) As all this,’ he goes on,

* It may be worth while in this place, following up the history of Sutton Parsonage House. As may be imagined, the rebuilding was put off indefinitely, and Mr Sterne died before the ruins were disturbed. His successor, Mr Cheap, tried to get something done by the widow, and has left us the result in an indignant entry in the old Sutton Registry : —

‘In the year 1764, during the Incumbency of Mr Laurence Sterne, the Vicarage House was burnt down. Though frequently admonished and required to rebuild the Vicarage House, he found means to evade the Performance of it. He continued Vicar till he died in March, 1768. Andrew Cheap was appointed his successor, and was advised to accept a composition for Dilapidations from the Widow. A suit was instituted for Dilapidations, but, after a time (the widow being in indigent circumstances), sixty pounds were accepted.

‘In April, 1770, the New House was begun, and finished in May, 1771.

‘Total amount of suit and Building the House, £576, 13s. 5d.

‘ANDREW CHEAP.’

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‘is included in a parenthesis, your lordship has a right to leave it out. It will not hurt the sense. I mean your own, for as for mine, the point has been long settled by the world.’ He then thanks him for the subscription to the sermons, ‘as well the *aimable comtesse votre chère mère*, for the honor of her name.’ Mr Hall had left him ‘bleeding to death at York of a small vessel in my lungs. The deuce take these bellows of mine! I must get ’em stopped, or I shall never have to *persiffler* Lord Effingham again.’ He talks of the York races, where he hopes to meet his friend with ‘Blaquiere and great Scroope.’

Just at this time, too, he was much entertained by the arrival of a letter from an elderly French gentleman at Montauban, in reference to his daughter Lydia. The French gentleman did not know him, but got his address at the Bureau de Poste. He then proceeded to announce that he was in love with Miss Sterne, and would be glad to know how much fortune Mr Sterne was prepared to give her at present and *how much at his death*. Mr Sterne took up his pen and answered him in true Shandean vein : — ‘Sir, I shall give her ten thousand pounds the day of marriage.

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My calculation is as follows: she is not eighteen, you are sixty-two — there goes five thousand; then, Sir, you at least think her not ugly, and as she has many accomplishments — speaks Italian, etc., I think you will be happy to take her on my terms, for here finishes the account of the ten thousand pounds.' It is not known how the elderly French gentleman accepted this ridicule of his proposal. It is certain, however, that Miss Sterne was not married to him.

His health was again warning him to move; in fact, though unconscious of it, he was fast hurrying into consumption. At the end of July he found his 'plaguy cough' gaining ground; 'and it will bring me to my grave, in spite of me. But while I have strength to run away from it I will. I have been wrestling with it for these twenty years past, and what with laughter and good spirits have prevented its giving me a fall; but my antagonist presses closer than ever upon me.' With these forebodings, he had already fixed his departure for October. But by September he received significant warnings to hasten his movements. The old enemy, 'the most violent spitting of blood mortal man experi-

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enced,' again seized upon him ; and he had to set off for York to try and recruit himself. This was when Mr Hall had left him ' bleeding to death.' These constant attacks seemed at times to dispirit him ; and he spoke of going to York, not for the sake of society, nor to walk by the side of the muddy ' Ouse,' but ' because I had rather (in case 'tis ordered so) *die there than in a postchaise on the road.*'

Still he was the old fitful Yorick, and was the next moment cheerful as ever. A friend dropped in and stayed many hours, listening with delight to his sallies. Going away, the friend met a local apothecary, who asked him how he did. ' Ill, ill,' said the friend ; ' I have been with Sterne, who has given me such a dose of *Attic Salt* that I am in a fever.'

' *Attic Salt*, sir, *Attic Salt*,' said the apothecary ; ' I have Glauber Salt in my shop, Epsom Salt — Oh ! I suppose 'tis some French salt. I wonder you would trust his report of the medicine ; he cares not what he takes himself.' Had this incident occurred but a few years before, it might have served to increase the ridicule poured on the head of the unhappy Slop.

As usual, he looked forward with delight to

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meeting his London and Paris friends again. This thought made him forget all past physical suffering. 'I long,' he wrote, 'to embrace my friends in London.' He had finally determined on his long-talked-of scheme — the tour in Italy — where he was to spend nine or ten months, call to see his wife and daughter on his road, and be back by the King's birthday. 'What a project!' he exclaimed with rapture. Profit, pleasure, and health, were to be all combined in the trip. *En attendant*, he wrote to his friend Mrs. Meadows to come down and see him. 'I will give you,' he wrote, 'a roast fowl for your dinner, and a clean table-cloth every day, and tell you a story by way of dessert. In the heat of the day we will sit in the shade, and in the evening the fairest of all milkmaids who pass by my gate shall weave a garland for you.' This sentimental key, which he was always privileged to assume, quite bears out the view of Mr Sterne's character we have dwelt on all through this book. It was his regular manner with ladies. He winds up with the more prosaic, 'God bless you, my dear madam.'

At last, about the first week in October, he was up in London once more, and had written

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to Paris to order a wig — *à bourse* — from Madam Requièrè in the Rue St Sauveur ; ‘for it is a terrible thing to be in Paris without a Perwig to one’s head.’ By the eighth or ninth he had put up the pair of black silk breeches, had taken his place in the Dover stage, and was fairly started on that famous expedition known as the Sentimental Journey. His last thought, however, was careful provision for his family ; and before he started he paid into Mr Becket’s hands six hundred pounds, upon which Mrs Sterne might draw. The packet sailed at nine the next morning, and by three he was sitting down to dinner in Mons. Dessein’s Hotel, at Calais, — a hotel which, but for that visit, would not have emerged from the ranks of ordinary houses of entertainment.

MR STERNE GOES TO OLD CALAIS

CHAPTER VI

MR STERNE GOES TO OLD CALAIS

IN starting on this new Sentimental Tour, Mr Sterne resolved to be guided by principles wholly opposite to those of the professional travellers who had preceded him. 'I pity the man,' he wrote in a famous passage, 'who can travel from Dan to Beersheba and cry 'tis all barren.' He met Smelfungus, his name for Smollett, in the grand portico of the Pantheon, "'Tis nothing but a huge cock-pit," said he.' Most justly did Mr Sterne say that the novelist only wrote an account of 'his own miserable feelings.'

Calais is or was an interesting old town, and always seems redolent of Sterne. Some twenty years ago its yellow walls were standing, the drawbridges down, and best of all, the old Dessein's Hotel, with its 'Sterne's Room,' was still shown. It was a pleasant, inviting place, having something of the air of

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a country house, having its yellow archway and large courtyard, round which ran the buildings. There were vines and general greenery, and over the archway little roofed dormer windows. Of a summer's Sunday, when there was a *fête* going on in the town, it was a pleasant thing to make an excursion over there and join in the genuine French festivity. The old inn, their town museum, was thrown open, and you could wander through its chambers and pause in Sterne's room, still labelled with his name. Behind it were fair gardens of great extent, at the bottom of which stood the theatre, which formerly belonged to the hotel. Now all has been pulled down and levelled to the ground, and a huge communal school erected on the ruins.

On his now famous *Sentimental Journey*, the best known of his writings, he had started with a famous compliment to the French, 'They order this matter better in France,' which is always misquoted, 'they manage things better in France.' Putting by 'half a dozen shirts and a black pair of silk breeches,' he got down to Dover; 'and the packet sailing at nine, by three I had sat down to a din-

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ner of fricasseed chicken.' 'After all,' wrote Mr Walpole, 'Calais surprised me more than anything I have since seen.' The justness of which impression, every one who recalls the look of his first French town, will acknowledge. Mr Sterne had walked through the great Place, and owned that nothing struck him more 'though I cannot say 'tis either well-paved or well-built; but 'tis in the heart of the town, and most of the streets, especially those in that quarter, all terminate in it.' And the old church tower, too, seems to have attracted him, though not so much as it was to do a later visitor — when a noble artist, and a yet nobler thinker, was to translate its poetry into rich English. 'I cannot find words,' says the author of *Modern Painters*, 'to express the intense pleasure I have always felt in first finding myself, after some prolonged stay in England, at the foot of the tower of Calais church. The large neglect, the noble mightiness of it, the record of its years written so vividly, yet without sign of weakness or decay: its stern vastness and gloom, eaten away by the Channel winds and overgrown with bitter sea-grass. . . . I cannot tell half the strange pleasure and thoughts

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that come about me at the sight of that old tower.' *

The English travellers of fashion, disgusted at last by 'the particular hardships imposed on Mr D——,' anxiously encouraged the opening of a new hotel, to be called the Hôtel d'Angleterre, under the management of young Dessein. The *Sentimental Journey* did the rest.

Dessein's grew to be a sort of fashion. The proprietor knew all the tide of nobility that flowed through the little town, and was useful in looking after any packages of theirs passing between London and Paris. The Inn, meanwhile, was considered to be the most extensive in Europe, and contained squares, gardens, shops of all kinds, workshops, and a handsome theatre. Still, notwithstanding this prosperity, the management broke down, and the famous Dessein went

* For myself personally I have the most romantic associations with the old town, from the day I first saw it in past years, when I came rumbling into it in an old diligence that had taken nearly the whole day to journey from Boulogne. It was then surrounded by its old walls, and fortifications, and gates — Richelieu's among the rest — and had still a number of refugee English living there. A few years ago the walls and gates were levelled, and the ditches filled up. It has now become a modern town. I recall a Sunday *fête* here which I went over to see, and was delighted to wander through the old Dessin, or Dessein, Hotel, and peep into Sterne's room.

OLD CALAIS

nigh to becoming bankrupt; but it was whispered that, so important was the establishment considered in its international bearings, that the government advanced him a sum of money free of interest, and helped him back to prosperity.

There are many portraits of him, for every traveller made it a point to stay at his Inn, and, in addition, was specially anxious to record that he *had* been there. All these likenesses agree in setting him forth as a smooth, plausible, greedy, money-getting French innkeeper, turning a penny upon his chaises and Louis d'ors, accompanying all his transactions with stately self-abnegation and a parade of noble sentiments. Our traveller had been writing his preface in his *désobligeante*, and was followed to his room by 'Monsieur Dessein, the master of the hotel, who had *just returned from vespers*, and, with his hat under his arm, was most complaisantly following me to put me in mind of my wants.' He spoke of the little carriage 'with a shrug *as if it would no way suit me*,' and then it occurred to Mr Sterne that it might have belonged to some traveller who left it to Monsieur Dessein's care to dispose of. Mr

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Sterne then reports the dramatic dialogue that ensued: “Now, was I master of this hotel,” said I, laying the point of my forefinger on Monsieur Dessein’s breast, “I would inevitably make a point of getting rid of this unfortunate *désobligeante* — it stands swinging reproaches at you every time you pass by it.” “Mon Dieu!” said Monsieur Dessein; “I have no interest —” “Except the interest,” said I, “which men of a certain turn of mind take in their own sensations. You suffer as much as the machine —” Monsieur Dessein made me a bow. “*C’est bien vrai,*” said he.’

At the *remise* door, Monsieur Dessein, ‘diabled the key above fifty times before he found out that he had come with the wrong one in his hand.’

About a year after Sterne’s death, the famous inn, or a portion of it, was burnt. The chamber in which the sentimental traveller drank to the King of France, and grew agitated over the *droit d’aubaine*, and the windows from which he had curiously scanned the ‘Janatones’ of Calais (not connected with the fishing interest) tripping across the Place, were all swept away in the

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conflagration. But M. Dessein was not to suffer. A whole company of English milords and aristocratic travellers — perhaps the most perverse grumblers at his extortions — came forward gallantly with sufficient funds to build him a fine new hostelry.

Many years ago a traveller * halting at Dessein's was shown 'No. Thirty-one,' and the Sir Joshua mezzotint over the chimney-piece, and yet was sceptical. The outside of the house was all overgrown with vine-leaves, and shrewdly suspecting there might be some record of the date of erection cut on the stone he sent up a man on a ladder to cut away the vine-leaves, an operation which led to the discovery of a tablet,

A.D. 1770,

just two years too late for the credit of 'Sterne's Room.' The waiter, however, in no way disconcerted, offered to fix on another room in the house, and call it Sterne's! †

Long after Mr Sterne had passed away, the

* [The traveller was John Poole, the wit and dramatist, who wrote an account of his journey for the *London Magazine* in 1825.]

† I am inclined to doubt this story, as the building always looked much later than the date mentioned.

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monk used to come in asking alms, being preserved as a sort of imperishable institution. Such an one — a gentle, resigned-looking man, almost ‘mild, pale, and penetrating’ — presented himself to the late Mr Rogers and his friend, as they were sitting over their wine; and the friend, to the gentle poet’s annoyance, made some such speech as Mr Sterne made to his monk. ‘Il faut travailler,’ said Mr Rogers’ friend; and the monk, bowing his head, meekly withdrew without a word. Mrs Piozzi must have seen this very famous monk, whom she calls Father Felix, and whose ‘manners and story,’ she says, struck Doctor Johnson exceedingly when he came through. The great moralist pronounced that so complete a character could scarcely be found in romance. He had been, like Mr Sterne’s monk, a soldier; knew English; read Addison, and played on the violin. He had been seen there about the year 1772, only five years after the Sentimental Journey, and was remarkable then; so it does seem likely that he was Mr Sterne’s Father Lorenzo. And Mrs Piozzi was glad to hear that he was alive, and had only gone into Spain.

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Dessein had one famous customer, the notorious bigamist, the famous Duchess of Kingston, who was pleased either with his assistance, his sympathy, or his entertainment, and is actually said to have left him two thousand pounds in her will. And with this notable connection, the grim figure of the one-eyed innkeeper — Mr Sterne's famous host — fades out — at what precise date I have not been able to discover. But a traveller stopping there, in 1815, found that it was not then held by any one of the name. It had come down to his son, and the son's daughter marrying one Quillacq — a familiar name in its way also — still directed the hotel. Finally came the enthusiastic traveller before described, about the year 1825, who found Quillacq 'directing,' and Mr Sterne's mezzotint hung up in No. Thirty-one, and the memory of what was reverently styled 'the Great Dessein' almost more tenderly cherished. But the traces of the great sentimentalist had faded. All that could be remembered was, that a *garçon*, who had personally attended on him, had died a few years before.

Not long since, arriving at the old town at

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midnight, I walked up along the piers towards the town. Passing through the dark streets I emerged in the Place, and at that moment the silvery chimes began performing in the picturesque steeple of the Town Hall. Beside it rose the grim old watch tower, formerly a lighthouse. Passing down a side street I found myself before the present Dessein's, formerly Quillacq's, and which is quite as old as was the old Dessein. A quaint house it is too, with rather stately, faded chambers, and a grand stair with banisters of flowing design, which ascend to the right and left. A worthy old French lady, Madame Dessein, still presided, and is glad to talk with the sympathetic stranger of the glory of her mansion, of '*feu* M. Sterne,' and of the sad story of the purchase of the old hotel by the town, M. le Préfet himself coming to wait on her, and to assure her it was for the good and welfare of the place. She was '*trop bonne Calaisienne*,' she said with tears, to resist such pressure. She told me that the present proprietor was, I think, the great-grandson of the original Dessein. Many years ago this advertisement was to be read in *Bradshaw* : —

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‘CALAIS — HOTEL DESSEIN — L. Dessein, the proprietor, has the honor to inform his numerous Patrons and Travellers in general, that, after the 1st of January, His Establishment will be transferred to the Hôtel Quillacq, which has been entirely new done up, and will take the name of “Hôtel Dessein.” The premises of the old Hôtel having been purchased by the Town of Calais, it ceases to be a Hôtel for Travellers.’

There is a quaint dignity about this proclamation. The ‘numerous patrons and travellers in general’ of that day — it is forty years — pass from the boat to other new and more tempting hotels, and indeed do not approach within half a mile of the town. On the night that I paid my midnight visit, there was only another traveller besides myself in Dessein’s *en transit*.

Pursuing his road from Calais, the traveller came to Montreuil. All along the journey he spoke his indifferent French, at least if what he spoke be reflected in what he wrote. But he was unconscious of his curious blunders, and did not care to make the common corrections. The original MS. of this journey is still to be seen, carefully and cleanly written out from his rough draught, and as carefully gone over for final alterations. And yet the French blunders are jealously preserved.

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The inn at Montreuil where Mr Sterne put up, though he has not mentioned its name, or its proprietor's, can be discovered — yet with some difficulty. Thirty years ago, in the diligence times, all the inns along the route claimed to be Mr Sterne's inn, and each had a 'Sterne's Room,' with the portrait after Sir Joshua over the chimney-piece. In Montreuil there were two claiming the distinction, and the visitor was shown two Sterne's rooms and two pictures. One was the Hôtel de l'Europe, whose claim vanishes in a second, it only dating from the beginning of the present century. But there was another old inn, reputed the oldest in the town, situate on the Green, where the *fêtes* and merry-makings have always been held, and where La Fleur danced and played his fiddle, and which bore the name of the Hôtel de la Cour de France. It was kept, thirty years ago, by the family of Varennes; and the Varennes told travellers the inn had been in their family, from father to son, beyond the recollection of men.

The legend in the hotel was, that Sterne had given them the privilege of calling it Sterne's favourite house, and they put into the

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guest's hand a little card, with the following inscription : —

VARENNES.
HOTEL DE LA COUR DE FRANCE.
A COTE DE LA POSTE AU CHEVAUX,
MONTREUIL.
STERNE'S FAVOURITE HOUSE.

We have even a sketch of the landlord, who corrected Mr Sterne's French, and who came in to tell him 'of the clever young fellow who would be proud to serve an Englishman.' Dr Warner rallied him on being '*gros crevé*,' and '*bon rieur*.' We see his rotund figure standing before Mr Sterne, and telling him how *un milord Anglais presentoit un écu a la femme-de-chambre*.*

And it was this 'tant-mieux' M. Varennes that introduced La Fleur, the most famous of valets. For Mr Sterne was prepossessed at the first glance with his 'genuine look and air,' and at once hired him. He had lost his portmanteau from behind his chaise, and got

* All through his account Mr Sterne confounds 'a lady's-maid' with 'a house-maid.' The reader need scarcely be reminded that *presenter* has not the meaning of giving a present ; and that, even if it had, there is a mistake in the grammatical case.

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out in the rain, and 'up to the knees in dirt,' to help the postilion to fasten it on, before he found out that he required a servant. La Fleur was exactly suited to him. He could, indeed, professionally only 'make splatter-dashes, and play on the fiddle, beat a drum, and do something on the fife,'—but 'a Frenchman can do everything.' He was just fitted for Mr Sterne, having a sort of even 'festivity of temper,' which, through all annoyances and discomforts, never was disturbed. He had, besides, a small cast of a coxcomb, but more a coxcomb of nature than of art; 'was always in love;' and, as the landlord remarked, when pointing him out from the inn, taking leave of the village girls, '*C'est un garçon de bonne fortune!*' *

Then comes the well-known beggar scene, when Mr Sterne was getting into his chaise; La Fleur's adventure on the bidet; and the pathetic picture of 'the Dead Ass' before the

* '*Bonnes Fortunes*,' must the landlord have said. To put together a few more of these droll mistakes of Mr Sterne, La Fleur speaks of his horse as being '*le cheval le plus-opiniâtre du monde*;' a mysterious adjective, which no Frenchman would ever use in such a sense. 'It is not *mal à propos* to take notice here,' instead of *hors de propos*. Madame Lambert writes to him that she has been prevented telling her story from some '*penchant*,'—another non-natural sense. At the Amiens Hotel there was a *femme de chambre*; and in the same page, 'Madame de Lambert sends her *fille de chambre*.'

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door of the post-house at Nampont. And the traveller of this day will have to halt 'at the foot of the steep hill, about a league from Nampont,' where Mr Sterne was shouting to his postilion — one more bit of testimony to his wonderful accuracy. So he passed on to Amiens, where La Fleur played on his fife while the servants danced, and where Mr Sterne copied the drummer's letter, and sent it in to Madame Lambert. Before the 20th of October, he was in Paris, and had put up at the Hôtel de Modène, Rue Jacob, in the Faubourg St Germain.

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CHAPTER VII

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PARIS at the season of this second visit was very gay, and full of English : and Mr Sterne, as he stood at the hotel window in his ‘dusty black coat,’ looking out, seeing ‘all the world in yellow, blue, and green, running at the ring of pleasure, the old with broken lances, the young in armour bright, which shone like gold,’ grew dispirited. But morally, a more striking change had taken place. The taste for amateur philosophy had developed into a *fureur*. Men and women, and fashionable men and women, had all become, or affected to be, *philosophers* ; and followed out their worship with the stern self-sacrifice of true children of fashion. This craze infected every boudoir, and destroyed every pleasure. Conversation — parties — everything had grown insufferably stupid. There were ‘swarms of English’ in Paris ; but

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with them he could not bring himself to mix. Among these swarms of English was Sir James Macdonald, a young Scotch baronet, a great friend of Mr Sterne's. About this young man, though no more than a mere sketch in literary history, a deep interest seems to hang. He is seen for a moment in Boswell's Tour, and exercised a sort of attraction on every one he met. Here, too, was another friend of Mr Sterne's, Mr Crawford, well known as 'Fish' Crawford, and brother to 'Flesh' Crawford, to whom the weak, elegant Carlisle used to lose large sums. 'One of the gayest young gentlemen,' says his valet, 'and, the greatest gambler that ever belonged to Scotland.' Here, too, was Lord Ossory, Mr Fitzmaurice, who had been a pupil of Adam Smith's, and Lord William Gordon, all friends of Mr Sterne; and here, too, was that blasphemous parson, John Horne Tooke.

Mr Sterne was not likely to let the laugh languish. In French society he was more popular than ever; and he has given an amusing account of the arts by which he turned the grave, philosophising mania to his own profit. On his first visit he had made friends in all directions. He knew the Count de Bissie,

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who affected to be reading Shakspeare when he called, the Marquise de Lambert, the old Marshal de Biron, 'who had signalised himself by some small feats of chivalry in the Cour d'Amour, and many more. The marshal talked of a visit to England, and of the English ladies. 'Stay where you are, I beseech you, Monsieur le Marquise, Les Messieurs Anglaise (*sic*) can scarce get a kind look from them as it is.' The old beau invited him to supper at once. His compliment to the Farmer-General, M. Popelinère, at whose concerts we have seen him 'assisting,' was just as skilful. He was asking about the English taxes; they were considerable, he heard. 'If we knew how to collect them,' said Mr Sterne, with a bow. A lady, Madame de V—— (this must have been Madame de Vence, a descendant of Madame de Sévigné), placed Mr Sterne by her on the sofa to discuss religion. She believed nothing. 'There are three epochs,' says Mr Sterne, in one of his most acute observations on society, 'in the empire of a Frenchwoman. She is coquette; then deist; then *dévoté*. The empire during these is never lost; she only changes her subjects.' Madame de Vence was only vibrating between

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her first and second. Yorick took her hand and mildly remonstrated with her. There was not a more dangerous thing in the world than for a beauty to be a deist. The restraints of religion and morality were the outworks which protected her. 'We are not adamant,' he continued, 'and there is need of all restraint, till age in her own time steals in and lays them on us ; but, my dearest lady,' said I, kissing her hand, 'it is too soon — too soon.'

Mr Sterne had the credit all over Paris of converting Madame de Vence. She told Diderot and the Abbé Morellet, that 'in one half-hour I had said more for revealed religion than all their encyclopædia had said against it.' She postponed the epoch of her Deism two years.

In this fashion he became popular, and heard on all sides such flattering testimonies as '*pardi, ce Monsieur Yorick a d'esprit. C'est un bon enfant;*' and abundance of such praise. But to his credit he grew ashamed of 'the dishonest reckoning,' though at this price he could have 'eaten and drank and been merry all the days of my life at Paris.' It seemed to him the gain of a slave. He had the courage to make this honest confession,

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although he had many French subscribers to his book and of this very coterie.

It is pleasant to follow in Mr Sterne's footsteps, and we can even track him to his Paris hotel. There were very many Hôtels de Modène in that time — forty years ago there were ten to be counted — but to Sterne's Hôtel de Modène we find a guide in the famous *femme de chambre* whom he met in the bookseller's shop, buying *Les Egaremens*. He had sent for a perruquier to set his hair to rights ; and then 'taking down the name of the Hôtel de Modène, went forth for a walk from where I lodged,' — to have a look at Paris.

It was evening, and he thought he would visit the Opéra Comique — so turning into the glove shop, he asked the way of that 'beautiful grisset,' who was sitting 'on the far side of the shop, facing the door,' working a pair of ruffles — a little scene which inspired Newton with a fresh Leslie-like cabinet picture. '“ You must turn, monsieur,” said she, going with me to the door of the shop, “ first to your left-hand — *mais prenez garde* — there are two turns, and be so good as to take the second ; then go down a little way and you'll

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see a church, and when you are past it, give yourself the trouble to turn directly to the right, and that brings you to the foot of the Pont Neuf, which you must cross; and there anyone will do himself the pleasure to show you." She repeated her instructions three times over to me, with the same good-natured patience the third time as the first' — a trait, as well as that getting up and going to the door, truly French, and consistent with their good-natured politeness to strangers.

Mr Sterne had forgotten his way home, and he went part of the way with her until he reached the Rue de Nevers, where they were to take different roads. 'Is this the way, my dear,' said he, 'to the Hôtel de Modène?' She said it was, or, 'that I might go by the Rue de Guénégaud, which was the next turn.' She, herself, was going to the Rue St Pierre, to which the Rue Guénégaud would also take her; and it would lead Mr Sterne to the Rue Jacob, and to his hotel. This House was said to be opposite the Rue des Deux Anges, on the side of the Rue des Petits Augustins.*

* These notes are from the *London Magazine*, and were written by Poole of facetious memory. It has been stated (in *Notes and Queries*) that he was all astray here, and that Sterne had confounded the Rue St Pierre with the Rue des Saint Pères, and that there is no Rue St Pierre on the south side of the river.

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He could have stayed scarcely three weeks, and then set out on his Italian tour. He made one of a party and travelled with some 'English of distinction.' He also took his servant, La Fleur, with him.

This famous valet has a history of his own. After Mr Sterne's death he often came to England, sometimes as a servant* to travelling gentlemen, sometimes 'as an express.' Friends of Mr Sterne, who had heard of him, or were glad to meet with him, used to ask him about his deceased master, and the Sentimental Journey, and got from him a few facts which crept into the public journals of the day. These valet chronicles† are in most cases suspicious; the 'valet-mind,' being in its most favourable aspect likely to take a mean and distorted view of domestic events, but more frequently inclined to fill up their meagre recollections with invention. The La Fleur narrative, though theatrical in parts, is not trustworthy. He was born in Burgundy, and

* Not a sergeant, as Sir Walter Scott quotes it.

† A few scraps are to be found in Davis's *Olio*, and were copied by Sir Walter Scott; but the more important passages were passed over. Mr Miles has shown in his interesting recollections that these notes are likely to have been the work of Latude, the hero of the escape from the Bastille. Latude claimed to have been La Fleur.

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ran away from his parents to Paris at eight years old. He was found one day on the Pont Neuf by a recruiting sergeant, and enlisted by him as a drummer. For six years he beat the drum, and 'made splatterdashes,' and in two more would have obtained his discharge; but his gipsy temper again prompted him to run away. He came to Montreuil, was engaged by Sterne, 'ragged as a colt,' and was now, in the first week of November, a most unseasonable time for travelling, setting off with him to Italy. A little farther on we shall take up his life and sham adventures.

Mr Sterne now set off on his 'Grand Tour.' He got down to Lyons very pleasantly, having met 'Maria' on the road near Moulins. I am inclined to believe that this Maria picture has been much coloured up; and that finding her so admired in his last volume, Mr Sterne could not resist the temptation of bringing her on again. No doubt he found the hint near Moulins, in some distressed girl sitting on the roadside, who may have moved his compassion. At Lyons, the party halted for some days, and had 'a joyous time.' The commandant was very hospitable, and had Mr Sterne to dine and sup every day. He left

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behind him there Lord F. W——, and about a dozen English. We are able to identify one at least of the ‘dozen English’ who were then at Lyons, and that an Englishman of some mark — John Horne Tooke — who had been in Paris, having flung away his clergyman’s gown at Dover, and was flaunting it, not in a ‘dusty black coat,’ but in ‘a suit of scarlet and gold,’ or ‘white and silver,’ or ‘blue and silver.’ He met Sterne at Lyons every day for a week, and planned to meet him again at Sienna during the summer. They often spoke of their common friend, Wilkes. But Tooke remarked that though Mr Sterne mentioned the famous demagogue ‘handsomely,’ yet he never spoke of him with warmth or cordiality. ‘Forgive my question,’ wrote that strange clergyman to Wilkes from Montpellier, ‘and do not be annoyed if I inquire, is there any coldness between you and Sterne?’ In the next letter the latter wrote to Paris from Pont Beauvoisin — he is pointed in his remembrances, — ‘If Wilkes is at Paris, *I send him all kind wishes.*’

They got on to Pont Beauvoisin,* where

* Mr Sterne, as usual, mistaking the names of places, calls it Beau Pontvoisin.

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begin those wonderful Savoy passes which have since become marvellous trophies of engineering; but there they were obliged to stop, for the rough mountain weather suddenly set in.

The voiturin was eight days taking him through that grand mountain scenery. Again at the close of the story of his journey we have delightful little glimpses, full of local colour and exquisite pastoral effect. Charming, indeed, that night piece at the hamlet, while he looked on at where the 'old man' played the vielle for the dance, and the girls ran to tie up their hair — which makes a perfect *pendant* to that other picture which he saw in the Bourbonnois, on his first journey. He was delighted with that 'poor, patient, quiet, honest people,' and was tempted into the false prophecy, that 'your poverty *will not be envied you by the world*, nor will your valleys be invaded by it.'

At last he came to the picturesque little town of St Michel. Late of a wintry evening he was pushing on to Modane, through mountain, wind, and rain — a 'tempestuous night' — when the voiturin halted his mules suddenly, and found the road blocked up by a

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huge fragment of rock which the cataract of the Arc had brought down from the mountains. The rude peasants of the place were hard at work labouring to clear the road ; but late as it was, and long as they had been working, it would take two more hours before the way would be open. The whole is a picture : the darkness, the tumbling cataracts, the wind, the rain ; the grand mountains ; the peasants labouring by torchlight, and the voiturin and his mules waiting expectant, with the pale face of Mr Sterne looking from the window.

We can only regret the infatuation which could have led him to disfigure all with the coarse suggestion which soils the last page of the *Sentimental Journey*. Otherwise the scene is admirably graphic and humorous, stamped with a genuine air of truth, and did not need that fatal touch at the end to have been a most ludicrous and Shandean embarrassment. It has been truly remarked that these gross strokes have brought their own heavy penalty ; for they have dragged down with them exquisite scenes which would have made his book a delightful drawing-room book, and consigned

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them for ever to a proscribed corner in the library.*

But this dramatic adventure did not occur to Mr Sterne himself. I have been enabled to trace it as 'a good thing,' which he heard from one of his jovial friends. It was an adventure that befel 'John Crawford, Esq., of Errol,' better known as 'Fish' Crawford, a wild, gambling Scotchman, and one of the March-Carlisle set. Him Mr Sterne met both in Paris and London; and from him he must have heard the embarrassment of the lady at the rustic inn, where there was no room.

It was between Verviers and Aix-la-Chapelle that 'Fish' Crawford met her. The house was full, and he had got the best bedroom, off which there was a closet. It was a Flemish lady and her maid, instead of a Piedmontese lady, as Mr Sterne put it. Madame Blond was her name. She sent up her compliments, 'would she be allowed to sit in the gentleman's room until bedtime?' Mr Crawford was 'very complaisant.' They played cards together to decide who should

* In the Guide Books, Modane is usually set out as the locality of 'the last scene in the *Sentimental Journey*,' whereas it took place five miles from that town.

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have the large bedroom or the little closet inside, and the lady lost. It is very curious, stumbling on this, and, more curious still, hearing it from the mouth of a valet. But though Mr Sterne tells his version with humour, the delicacy is all on the side of the valet.*

He reached Turin at last, and was established there by the 15th of November. He was delighted with his first Italian city — just as he had been with Paris ; and was ‘very happy’ during the fortnight he stayed. With his usual success, he had been there scarcely a day before he had been secured at half-a-dozen houses of distinction. He was to be presented to the King, and after that ceremonial would have his hands full of engagements. Turin was at that time a gay little capital, though under the tyranny of a strict etiquette, and was very stately in all its manners and observances. He found no English there but his friend Sir James Macdonald and Mr Ogilvy, so all this festivity was from native families.

After a ‘joyous fortnight,’ during which they met with ‘all kinds of honours,’ they

* See the *Travels of John Macdonald, a Cadet of the Family of Keppoch*, who was servant to ‘Fish’ Crawford.

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departed reluctantly. Sir James Macdonald and Mr Sterne were to travel together through Milan and the smaller Italian cities which dot the 'Grand Tour,' on to Rome. They would both like to have stayed. 'But,' said Mr Sterne, 'health on my side, and good sense on his, say 'tis better to be at Rome.' As it fell out, it will be seen that these two motives were curiously shifted. From Turin he found time to write to Mrs Sterne, under cover to his banker, and then entered his chaise. Their next stage was Milan.

Here it was that Mr Sterne met a little adventure which he tells very pleasantly. He was going to Martini's concert, and was just entering the door of the hall, when he met an Italian lady, the Marquesina F——, 'coming out in a sort of a hurry ; she was almost upon me before I saw her. So I gave a spring to one side to let her pass. She had done the same, and on the same side too, so we ran our heads together. She instantly got to the other side to get out. I was just as unfortunate as she had been, for I had sprung to that side, and opposed the passage again — we both flew together to the other side, and then back, and so on ; it was ridiculous ; we both blushed

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intolerably ; so I did at last the thing I should have done at first. I stood stock still, and the Marquesina had no more difficulty.' After a moment's hesitation, Mr Sterne, than whom no one was more skilful in improving an opening, ran after her ; and the description of his behaviour is worth quoting, as a specimen of that easy manner which was the secret of his fascination. He first apologised for his awkwardness, saying, 'it was my intention to have made her way. She answered she was guided by the same intention towards me, so we reciprocally thanked each other. She was at the top of the stairs, and seeing no *chicesbee* near, I begged to hand her to her coach. So we went down the stairs, stopping at every step to talk of the concert and the adventure. "Upon my word, madame," said I, when I had handed her in, "I made six different attempts to let you go out." "And I made six efforts," replied she, "to let you enter." "I wish to heaven you would make a seventh," said I. "With all my heart," said she, making room. Life is too short to be long about the forms of it. So I instantly stepped in. And the acquaintance that arose out of this little transaction,' Mr Sterne adds, gave him

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more pleasure than any one he made in Italy.

The Marquesina F—— seems a name almost hieroglyphical ; but curious to say, we can discover who she was. It is pleasant to know every one who came in contact with Mr Sterne. Arthur Young passed through Milan some years later, and saw this very lady, but, gifted with less discretion than Mr Sterne, gave her name. It was the Marquesina Fagniani. Which touches another chord of association ; for this was the very lady who figures so curiously in Selwyn's Life, the mother of little Mie Mie, the little child about whom he made himself almost ridiculous, exciting the smiles and pity of his friends. The whole makes a strange chapter in the history of human absurdity.*

From Milan they travelled on to Parma. They travelled '*à la hâte*,' and many places they merely passed through. They visited Piacenza and Bologna, halting a short time at each (La Fleur adds the little Duchy of Modena to the list), and having weather all the time 'as delicious as a kindly April in Eng-

* In an account of Ugo Foscolo's life it has been stated that one of his ardent attachments was for a daughter of the lady.

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land,' found themselves suddenly among the deep snows of the Apennines. They were at Florence by the 18th of December, and remained, Mr Sterne says, but three days, 'to dine with the Minister (Walpole's Sir Horace Mann, just promoted to be Envoy),' where they were to meet Lords Townshend* and Cowper;† and then they looked forward 'to treading the Vatican, and being introduced to all the saints in the Pantheon,' within five days. He wrote again from Florence to Mrs Sterne.

They then passed on to Rome, and hurried down to Naples. There he put up at the Casa di Mansel, and remained several weeks. It seems to have been charming. He revelled in the delightful air of the place, and the meagre figure of Yorick was actually 'growing fat, sleek, and well-liking, not improving in stature, but in breadth.' He enjoyed himself thoroughly. There were some five-and-twenty English there; but he found his way, as usual, into the best Italian society. He had letters to 'Prince Cardito d'Offredo,' who behaved to him, according to the quaint and

* [This should be "Tichfield."]

† Lord C——r, it is given in the letter.

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more old-fashioned comprehensiveness of the word, with 'great politeness.' He was there during the Carnival, which was 'jolly — nothing but operas, punchinellos, festinos, and masquerades.'

On the fifth of February, 'we, that is, *nous autres*, were all dressing out' for a superb entertainment which was to be given by the Princess Francavivalla; and the significance of '*nous autres*' lay in confining it merely to the English, who were to dine with her 'exclusive.' No wonder he was 'happy as a king,' and found the 'climate heavenly.' He discovered 'new principles of health' within, and fondly hoped to have added ten years to his life by the journey. In the midst of all this festivity he did not forget those on the other side of the Alps. Three days after the Princess Francavivalla's grand entertainment he wrote to his banker, to desire he would 'let Mrs Sterne have what cash she wants.' He explains that he has hardly used any of the letters of credit he had been furnished with, having taken up 'no more than about fifty louis at Turin, as much at Rome' — and as he had a plan for travelling home in the quality of 'bear leader,' he would draw for little more

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till his return, 'so you will always have enough to spare for my wife. The beginning of March, be so kind as to let her have a hundred pounds to begin the year with.'

To his 'dear girl' he wrote about the same time, as usual affectionately, and yet with a dash of melancholy, which, though the 'Princess Francavivalla's' masquerade was coming on, was quite characteristic of Yorick. They had been at Tours (Mrs and Miss Sterne had their little enjoyments too), and were talking of going to Bourges en Bresse. They had made the acquaintance of a Mr and Mrs C——, who had been very kind to them. Miss Sterne had attracted a 'little French admirer,' and a Marquis de ——, who had introduced himself as an intimate friend of Mr Sterne's, but who proved to be an impostor. 'I desire,' wrote the father to his 'dear girl,' 'you will get your mother to write to Mr C——, that I may discharge every debt ; and then, my Lydia, if I live, the produce of my pen shall be yours. If fate reserved me not that, the humane and good, part for thy father's sake, part for thy own, will never abandon thee. If your mother's health will permit her to return to England, your sum-

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mers I will render as agreeable as I can at Coxwold — your winters at York.' The gay and the heartless are not always thus provident of those at a distance.*

His friend Sir James Macdonald had gone with him to Naples, and was in the same house ; but was suffering from a dreadful attack of ague or rheumatism, which must have been some local malaria fever. Its remains he took with him on to Rome, where he died in the July of the same year, a few weeks after Mr Sterne left. He was but twenty-five years old ; and in an inscription which his friend, Lord Lyttleton, wrote for a memorial tablet, and which Boswell read at Skye, it is stated that, notwithstanding the difference of religion at Rome, 'such extraordinary honours were paid to his memory as had never graced that of any other British subject since the death of Sir Philip Sidney.'

Mr Sterne had posted to Rome to be in time for the Holy Week. He was treated there with great distinction. It is said he used to walk alone and read aloud in the

* It is something to find that Mr Southey — who was not likely to judge too gently of a character like Sterne's — was struck by these letters from abroad. He owned they refuted the popular notion of neglect and indifference.

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Medici gardens. He had the best introductions to the noble families of Doria, Santa Croce, etc. At Rome, too, he sat for one of the fine portrait busts which, like the Reynolds' portrait, seem almost unique for their life and characteristic expression. This was done in terra-cotta. He was reduced to inconvenient straits for want of money, and the 'sentimental stranger' used to be pointed at with a sort of pity as he wandered about in deep dejection. It was even insinuated by his valet, that in these difficulties some of the noble families came forward and helped him. The story seems incredible. We see from his own letters that Panchaud had a correspondent at Rome, the Marquis Belloni (mentioned in Wilkes' letters), a great banker, with whom all the English had their accounts, and upon him Mr Sterne had letters of credit. No Englishman abroad, with friends of distinction, is likely to be refused money at a banker's.

On his first visit he fell in with a 'good-hearted young gentleman,' a Mr E——, whom he had met some three years before, and whom he engaged to lead home as 'a bear,' through 'Venice, Vienna, Saxony, Ber-

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lin, and so by the Spaw, and then through Holland to England.' This plan could not have been carried out ; for, as it will be seen, he came home by the regular Lyons route.

Altogether, Mr Sterne enjoyed his travels ; and though he met with a few discomforts and some trifling annoyances, such as ' the pistol tinder-box, which was, moreover, filched from me at Sienna, and twice that I payéd five pauls for two hard eggs, once at Ruddi Coffini, and a second time at Capua ; ' still, ' a journey through France and Italy, *provided a man keeps his temper all the way*, is not so bad a thing as *some people would have you believe.*' A sly stroke at the sour chronicle of Doctor Smollett. It had been well for that famous humorist if he had got off cheaply with this quiet thrust ; but Mr Sterne was preparing to find room for him in the *Sentimental Journey*, and had devised for him the odious sobriquet of Smelfungus. Excellent is the philosophy of travel given as the result of experience. ' 'Tis nonsense to imagine they will lend you their voitures to be shaken to pieces for nothing ; and unless you pay twelve sous for greasing your wheels, how should the poor peasant get butter to his bread ? We

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really expect too much ; and for a livre or two above par for your supper and bed, who would embroil their philosophy for it. For Heaven's sake pay it !' Valuable and healthful counsel, even in these times, when the 'voitures' have been finally shaken to pieces ; and there is no greater trial of temper, than a customs examination and a train lost by a few seconds.

Coming up through France he had laid out a plan to leave his regular course, for the long-promised pleasure of seeing his wife and girl. But he was to have infinite trouble in finding them. They had been changing their place of abode again and again, and he had literally to track them through half-a-dozen towns, receiving news of them at each. He found them at the end, in *Franche Comté*. The meeting after this long absence seems to have been most affectionate. 'Poor woman !' said Mr Sterne, describing it, 'she was very cordial, etc.' (how Shandean are these 'etc.'s'). With his daughter he was delighted, and found her 'improved in everything he wished her.' But Mrs Sterne, with her old indiscretion, would not return to England as yet, and was most anxious to stay another year or so. But she remarked a great change in him, and

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was struck with his look of ill-health, and in fact he left her 'most melancholy on that account.'

The point was left open, and Mr Sterne again struck into the regular road that led up to Paris. But at Dijon he was tempted to turn aside to 'a delicious château,' belonging to a French Marquis of his acquaintance, which was at that time full of agreeable company, including seven witty and handsome French ladies. In which pleasant encampment he remained 'patriarching it' for a full week. He had not enjoyed himself so much for long. 'This is a delicious part of the world: most celestial weather, and we lie all day without damps upon the grass.' He was, besides, 'inspired twice a-day (for her ladyship is not stingy of her wine) with the best Burgundy that grows upon the mountains which terminate our land here.'* No wonder with such associations that he felt 'unaccountably well, and most accountably nonsensical, and full of boisterous spirits,' and felt an irrepressible longing to gallop away at once with his pen. 'In faith,' he says, exuber-

*This sketch recalls a charming picture, extracted by Leigh Hunt from Colonel Pinkney's *Travels in France*.

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antly, writing from this charming plaisaunce, 'I think I shall die with it in my hand. But I shall live these ten years, my Antony.' A delusive hope, for already his sands were being counted, and the poor gay Shandean had but a year and ten months of life before him.

He tore himself from the château and the seven handsome ladies, intending to post it night and day to Paris; and tarried there only long enough to 'wind himself up' to roll on to Calais. He had made a covenant with his Cousin Antony to be home in time to sup with him at Crazy Castle on the King's birthday, and he actually got to Yorkshire before that solemnity came round.

THE LAST SERMON

CHAPTER VIII

THE LAST SERMON*

HE had not been home a fortnight, when he was writing to Paris, to make faithful provision for his wife and daughter. They were at Marseilles, and about to move to Châlons, and Mrs Sterne had fallen sick. He sent them fifty pounds through Mr Panchaud. 'I have,' he writes to him, 'such entire confidence in my wife that she spends as little as she can, *tho' she is confined to no particular sum*; her expenses will not exceed three hundred pounds a year, unless by ill-health or a journey, *and I am very willing she should have it*; and you may rely, in case she should draw for fifty or a hundred pounds extraordinary, that it and every

* [This sermon, which may have been Sterne's last appearance in the cathedral pulpit, was preached on Sunday, August 24, 1766. For details of the brilliant occasion, see *The St James Chronicle* for August 26-28, 1766. In the Introduction, attention has already been called to some inaccuracies in the account given by Mr Fitzgerald.]

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demand shall be punctually paid, and with proper thanks; and for this the whole Shandean family are ready to stand security.'

Not long after he wrote again, afraid that the banker should not have complied with his wishes.* He was getting uneasy, too, about Mrs Sterne's state of health, and was actually negotiating a journey to Paris as 'bear leader,' to a young nobleman (an odious office, to which he had special aversion), in order that he might with economy fly over to Avignon. A little later he wrote again, adding thirty guineas more to his original order, for Mrs Sterne was something worse. 'Do write to her,' he presses on his banker. The illness was, however, not serious for the present, and in a few weeks she grew better.

But this autumn there came a little provincial excitement to make an agreeable break in his solitude. The young King of Denmark was making a progress through England, and was being received everywhere, as the public journals put it, with 'great demon-

* For one of Mr Sterne's reputed laxity in business matters, he seems to have balanced accounts with his Paris banker with wonderful exactness. He was always a little in advance, but only a little, and was sending over drafts to settle his account with great regularity.

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strations of joy.' He was now coming to York. The great races were to be on the eighteenth of August, and he had promised to be present.

That festival was long remembered in York, where the gathering was considered the grandest ever known. Nearly seven hundred persons of distinction subscribed to the ball at the Assembly Rooms. A splendid retinue of nobility escorted the Duke of York. Sunday intervened, and the august party attended service in the Cathedral, where the Danish King was placed in state on the Archbishop's throne. There was a sermon — and that sermon was preached by certainly the most famous preacher of the province — the Reverend Mr Sterne. He had taken his leave of preaching for ever, as he fancied ; but on such an occasion he could scarcely resist. 'An excellent discourse,' said the London papers.

He was already at his ninth — and what proved to be the last — volume of *Tristram*; and had laid out that he would write but one that year. His heart was on a new book, on a new plan — 'a work of four volumes' — for such was the extent he medi-

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tated for his *Sentimental Journey*. He grew tired of Tristram and his adventures. At the same time, he was writing to his friends his philosophical refrain about happiness being independent of situation, and of each man finding it within himself. But this, it is to be feared, was what he himself would call 'no bad rant:' for no one leaned so little on himself, or changed his stage so often in search of comfort, as Yorick.

He worked very hard all the winter at his book, shut up in his solitary parsonage, varying the monotony by a stray letter, written and received. Sometimes a 'Crazy-ite,' one of the Stevenson set, would pass by and look in, and him he would charge with a letter for the Castellan. He considered him 'as a bank-note in a corner drawer of my bureau. I know it is there — (I wish I did!).' The old Stillington Common cropped up again, and harassed him with what he hated — business: and every moment he had before him the prospect of a rough road and wintry journey through French ice and snows down to Marseilles, where his sick wife was lying.

She, however, grew better; and they de-

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terminated with the new year to move from Marseilles to a romantic spot near Avignon, a charming place, actually beside the fountain of Vaucluse. Nothing more delightful could be conceived; and it makes a companion picture to the Toulouse mansion. Mr Sterne could appreciate the associations of Petrarch and Laura, and envied their residence. It was a marvel of cheapness—seven rooms *en suite*, ‘half furnished with tapestry, half with blue taffety; the permission to fish and have game; so many partridges a week, etc.; and the price?—guess! sixteen guineas a year!’ Well might Mr Sterne say, ‘There’s for you, Panchaud!’

They were established there by the end of February; and their kind paymaster at home had taken care they should have a hundred louis to enable them to leave Marseilles with credit as soon as the Carnival was over.

At this new residence they made a pleasant acquaintance in the Abbé de Sade, an accomplished scholar, who had written a life of Petrarch, and who was correcting a French translation of Mr Sterne’s *Sermon*, made by Miss Lydia Sterne. There they

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most remarkable and found friends—
among others, who was rude to
him in a way. But it is clear these
two ladies had scarcely discretion enough to
avoid their own embarrassment in a foreign
country. The proposals made so frequently
to Mrs. Sterne's hands show certain attrac-
tions in her character, which issue in all
cases now. It was a judgment in Mrs
Sterne as to the quality of the suitors she
conferred on her daughter.

As was remarked before,
when Mr. Sterne's letters to his daughter at
this period are affectionate, so playful, and
so unassuming, it seems to alter his tone
and style of expression as it were, her play-
fulness in his heart to him:
"I write you all with naturally, and
with you all with well. She breaks her
heart all in a moment of Paris: 'My
daughter has a passion for me, and you
know I am not her nothing. It'—by a
characteristic omission, it leaves out the
word of the other in words—'it must be
strong with again and in the cords.' He
sends Mrs. Sterne a reasonable medicine,
and happy advertisement. Huxham's Tincture

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of Bark,' a good remedy for the ague. These are not tokens of tremendous weight and significance; yet there is sometimes more delicacy and affection accompanying a small present, and its associations, than in the crude bulk of more costly and substantial tokens. Absence had not sunk him into laziness or indifference.

As usual, Christmas again found him in London; and with the arrival of Mr Sterne came up, too, the ninth *Shandy*. He now chose out new lodgings, to which he always came for the future, at number 41 Old Bond Street, a very fashionable quarter; on the west side was a bag-wig maker's and on the first floor of the bag-wig maker's, were Mr Sterne's rooms. As we now walk down that old-fashioned thoroughfare, we may lift our eyes to Mr Sterne's windows, but the bag-wig maker has passed away with the bag-wigs he made; a cheesemonger took his place in our time, and finally a firm of picture dealers. Messrs Agnew have erected a handsome gallery on the site.

Tristram had now passed through the press, and on the 29th of January, 1767, the customary advertisement appeared. But

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a note appended showed how keenly relished had been the new-born loves of Captain Shandy. ‘* * This volume contains the amours of my Uncle Toby.’ There was but one volume, instead of the favourite number, two ; and in that one volume, there was but half the customary number of pages. The price was only two shillings, ‘sewed.’ But a more curious interest attaches to the little volume, for it was the last of the *Shandy* series, and, begun abruptly, it stopped short as abruptly, and remains now, like his other works, a mere fragment. It came out prefaced by a strange dedication. Six years before he had dedicated his first *Tristram* instalment to Mr Pitt, the great patriot Minister. Mr Pitt was now Lord Chatham, and to this nobleman he inscribed the last portion. It is in a vein of satirical compliment.* ‘My opinion of Lord —— is neither better nor worse than it was of Mr —— . Honours, like impressions upon coin, may give an ideal and local value to a bit

* He has disguised the names under stars. Lord * * * * * has the right number, but Mr * * * only three, a curious illustration of Mr Sterne’s failing in spelling.

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of base metal, but not to gold and silver'—a curious anticipation of the often-quoted lines of Burns'—'The guinea stamp,' etc. It is scarcely in good taste; and if he had the popular aim of dedication in those times in view, it was hardly calculated to rouse the dormant patronage of the great minister.

More *Sermons* too were ready, and were announced on Saturday, January the eighteenth.* The old title-page device was still kept up. They were the composition of 'Mr Yorick,' but were published by the 'Rev. Mr Sterne.' The price was five shillings, 'sewed;' † and '*.* The nobility and gentry who have honoured Mr Sterne with their subscriptions,' were requested to send for their copies to the publishers. The author spoke boastfully in his letters of that list of 'the nobility and gentry,' but scarcely with exaggeration. It was a dazzling show, such as must have made many a garreteer's heart burn with envy. There was to be seen in it

* [January 18, 1766, *not* 1767.]

† 'Boards' and 'cloth' being as yet unknown, every book came out either in paper covers, like French books, or 'whole bound in calf.' Immediate binding became a necessity. Those who love, like Mr Shandy, to *bouquiner* among the stalls, will have remarked the legion of little books of this period, all in the one monotonous livery of a brown old calf.

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Mr Selwin's hands for the use of Mrs Sterne.* He was full of his book, and anxious that the banker should get him 'the honour of a few names of men of science and fashion. 'Tis subscribed for at a great rate.' A fortnight later he wrote again, anxious that Mrs Sterne should have her hundred pounds. They had just written over an agreeable piece of news. A Marseilles gentleman, worth twenty thousand livres a year, 'and much at his ease,' had 'offered' for Miss Sterne; and Mr Sterne wrote gaily to his friends that he supposed 'Mademoiselle, with Madame ma Femme, will negotiate the affair.' Nothing more, however, was heard of the French monsieur who was so 'very much at his ease.' Most likely he fancied Miss Sterne to be equally very much at her ease; and so, like many others of the lady's proposals, it came to nothing. Mr Sterne, when details were forwarded to him, interpreted his attentions with the eyes of a man of the world. 'As to Mr——,' he wrote, in a postscript to Miss

* This letter, dated Feb. 28, and not published, is curiously like one in the printed collection,—indeed is word for word in many sentences. In this last letter he calls Mr Selwin 'Mr Selvey,' and talks of 'Merseilles.' He also adds, how he expected to make a thousand guineas of his new book. Most likely he thought the first had miscarried.

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Lydia, 'by your description he is a fat fool; I beg you will not give up your time to such a being.'

Yet he could write, with a charming gaiety, pleasant light letters down to the ladies at Newburgh; letters addressed, indeed, to his friend, Lord Fauconberg, but stored with London gossip for their amusement. These little 'gazettes' unfold the old story of the dinners with the 'Duke of York's people,' the concerts, and the first of Mrs Cornely's Soho assemblies. He had also found his way to the acquaintance of the wild Lord March, afterwards 'old Q.' These characteristic epistles will be welcome at full length.*

'LONDON, *Friday*.


'MY LORD, — When we got up yesterday morning, the streets were 4 inches deep in snow — it has set in now with the most intense cold. I could scarce lay in bed for it, and this morning more snow again. Tho' the roads after all are extreamly good near town, and, I suppose, every where else, the snow has been very deep in Kent.

'No news. I dined yesterday with Lord

* The originals are at Newburgh, and I was allowed to use them by the kindness of Sir George Wombwell.

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Marsh and a large company of the duke of York's people, etc., and came away just as wise as I went. The King at Cimon the new opera last night—nobody at Covent Garden but the citizens' children and apprentices. The Duke of York was to have had a play house of his own, and had studied his part in the Fair Penitent, and made Garrick act it twice on purpose to profit by it; but the King, 'tis said, has desired the Duke to give up the part and the project with it.

 (all this is for the Ladies) to whom, with all comp^s to the party at Quadrille and Lady Catherine.

‘I am, my Lord,

‘Y^r most unworthy Gazetteere that ever wrote,

‘but most faithfully y^r ever obliged,

‘L. STERNE.’

‘BOND STREET, *Jan. 16th, 1767.*

‘MY LORD, — There is a dead stagnation of everything, and scarce any talk but about the damages done over the Kingdom by this cruel storm; it began yesterday morning to thaw gently, and has continued going on so till now. I hope it will all get away after the same manner. It was so intensely cold on Sunday,

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that there were few either at the church or court, but last night it thaw'd ; the concert at Soho top full — and was (this is for the ladies) the best assembly and the best concert I ever had the honour to be at. Lady Anne had the goodness to challenge me, or I had not known her, she was so prudently muffled up ; Lord Bellasyse, I never saw him look so well ; Lady Bellasyse recovers *à marvielle* — and y^r little niece I believe grows like flax.

‘ We had reports yesterday that the York stage coach wth 14 people in and about it, were drown'd by mistaking a bridge — it was contradicted at night — as are half the morning reports in town.

‘ The *School for Guardians* (wrote by Murphy) scarce got thro' the 1st night — 'tis a most miserable affair — Garrick's Cimon fills his house brim full every night.

‘ The streets are dirtier than in the town of Coxwould — for they are up to the knees, except on the *trottoire*.

‘ I beg my best comp^s, my Lord, to Mrs Bellasyse the Ladies —, and to S^r Bryan Stapleton, and am

‘ With unfeigned attachm^{ts}, y^r l^dp's
faithful, L. STERNE.’

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The thoughtless clergyman was, however, to be troubled with many rude correctives; though he affected to 'laugh loudly' at all such protests, he still felt them secretly. To the end of his life he was always spoken of with a coarse freedom in the public journals. It has been mentioned how one of the curious effects of the popularity of *Tristram* was, that it should have become a young ladies' book, and been hidden away in young ladies' pockets; and this feature grew so developed as to be noticed in many contemporary papers and magazines. But it was to receive a yet more curious confirmation. On the morning of Monday, March the 30th, there appeared in the *Public Ledger* a letter, signed 'Davus,' full of the old scandal and the old complaints; and on the same day some well-meaning persons, struck by the justness of these strictures, sent down from London an anonymous letter, addressed to Mr Sterne's archbishop. With all his failings, he might contend against, or, at least, affect to despise, open attack; but it was hard to struggle against assailants in the dark. Happily it seems to have met with the reception such

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unaccredited strokes should always meet ; for it does not appear to have injured him with his superiors.*

‘MAY IT PLEASE YOUR GRACE : —

‘Several well wishers to your Grace, and to religion and the cause of virtue, modesty, and decency, think it a duty incumbent on them, consistently with that regard they have for them, as well as order and right conduct, to refer your Grace to a letter, signed *Davus*, in the *Public Ledger* of this day, very justly, as they humbly think, animadverting on the scandal they have long taken and oftener conceived at the works of *Tristram Shandy* as written by a clergyman, and a dignified one, uncensured by his superiors.’ They went on to say that they ‘harboured no peek’ against him and were certain that his Grace, ‘as this gentleman was within his province to censure,’ would use all proper means ‘*as shall deter this wanton scandal to his cloth, from proceeding in this lewd, ludicrous manner, as he has long done, to the shame and disgrace of his sacred order and the detriment of society ; of which surely*

* This letter was found among the Archbishop’s papers.

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many fathers and mothers can testify, whose daughters have not thereby been mended, but most probably corrupted, of which there may be given instances.

‘MONDAY Mar. 30, 1767.’

This grave and striking indictment seems exactly to express the right view of our hero's work, and in a rough way shows how discreditable was the *rôle* he had taken up. From encouragement and long striving to ‘spice’ his writing with grossness, it is clear he had become quite insensible to the claims of decency, and indifferent as to what was thought of him. There are some letters of his written to a ‘Dear H ——’ or Hannah, as I find in the original — written in a too free style, which shows how demoralised he had become, if not quite hardened. In another he writes, — ‘Now be a good dear girl, Hannah, and give these to Fanny, and Fanny will give that w^h belongs to her sister, herself, and when I see you I'll give you a kiss. Theres for you! But I have something else for you which I am fabricating at a great rate, and that is my journey, which shall make you cry as much as ever

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it made me laugh, or I'll give up the business of sentimental writing and write to the body — that is Hannah! — what I am doing in writing to you, but you are a *good body*, and that's worth half a score *mean souls*. Upon mine, I am yrs., L. SHANDY.'

YORICK AND ELIZA

CHAPTER IX

YORICK AND ELIZA

THE charge that his writings had done injury to the young was often repeated.

It is a sad business altogether,* and it must be said that there is something degrading to our literature, and almost unique, to find a writer, who has to earn his wage by pandering to the grosser tastes of his time. At the same time there are signs that, with the decay of his health, he was beginning to have uneasiness and compunctions as to his unworthy office. Unluckily, while making this plea for him, we find him engaged in one of his most sentimental amours, over which the sober must shake

* It is stranger to find in the sermon read by Trim a description of his own state, — 'A man shall be vicious and utterly debauched in his principles, exceptionable in his conduct to the world,' etc., etc. 'Surely you must think conscience must lead such a man a troubled life. Alas! conscience had something else to do all this time than break in upon him. . . . This dumb god was either talking or pursuing, or was in a journey, or peradventure he slept and could not be awake.'

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their heads and the judicious grieve. All the world knows 'Yorick's letters to Eliza,' and the French, in particular, have taken a special interest in this episode, which is much 'in their line.' It is a curious and not uninteresting episode, and I shall now give complete account of the transaction, the first that has yet been presented.

In Bristol Cathedral is to be seen a graceful monument, consisting of two classical figures bending over a shield, one bearing a torch, the other a dove. This is a tribute to the memory of Mrs Elizabeth Draper, Yorick's 'Eliza,' and Sterne's friend, 'in whom,' it records, 'genius and benevolence were united.' 'She died Aug. 3d, 1778, aged 35.' 'Yorick's letters to Eliza' enjoyed enormous popularity in their day, and are still relished abroad. It was in the year 1766 that he became acquainted with this lady, 'by accident' we are told. He was then a rather elderly Lothario of fifty-six, and with considerable art he took care to assume a sort of paternal or clerical tone in keeping with his time of life. She had been born in the country of Anjinga, the farthest English settlement on the Malabar coast, which

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prompted Raynal's extraordinary burst of rapture about the place in his *History of the Indies*. When treating of the English settlements on the coast of Malabar he suddenly launched out into this super-French piece of bombast: 'Territory of Anjinga, you are nothing; but you have given birth to Eliza! One day these commercial establishments founded by Europeans on the coast of Asia will exist no more. The grass will cover them, or the avenged Indian will have built over their ruins; but if my writings have any duration, the name of Anjinga will remain in the memory of men. Those who shall read my works, those whom the winds shall waft to thy shores, will say, "It is there that Eliza Draper was born;" and if there is a Briton among them, he will hasten to add with pride, "and she was born of English parents." . . . From the height of the heavens, thy first and last country, receive, Eliza, my oath — I swear never to write a line by which the world shall not recognise thy friend.'

Yet the object of this inflated language was, after all, an average heroine, whose admirers, oddly enough, seem limited to two

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disorderly clerics, one of whom was virtually unfrocked, and the other pronounced by a bishop to be 'an irrevocable scoundrel.' According to the candid description of her admirer, she seems to have been a rather ordinary-looking person, but there was a secret charm about her which it required an intimate friendship to develop. 'When I first saw you,' he says, 'I beheld you as an object of compassion, and a very plain woman. The mode of your dress disfigured you—but nothing now could render you such but the being solicitous to make yourself admired as a handsome one. You are not handsome, Eliza, nor is yours a face that will please the tenth part of your beholders. But you are something more; for I scruple not to tell you, I never saw so intelligent, so animated, so good a countenance. A something in your voice and eyes you possess in a degree more persuasive than any woman I ever saw, read, or heard of; but it is that bewitching sort of nameless excellence that *men of nice sensibility alone* can be touched with.'

Mr Sterne was deeply skilled in the arts of gaining the female heart, and this adroitly-

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calculated depreciation was likely to be more acceptable than an elaborate compliment. Mr James Forbes, who wrote four portly tomes of Eastern travel, met her in society at Bombay, and was impressed by her 'refined taste and elegant accomplishments, which required no panegyric from his pen.' Mr Draper, her husband, we are told, was 'much respected in that quarter of the globe.' He was Second Commissioner at Bombay, and later became Chief at Surat. In the voluminous Hastings' correspondence we find him offering his compliments and services to that great man, announcing also to him his recall to Bombay. Mr Sterne insinuates that he was a penurious person, anxious for the wife's return on account of the expense he was put to. It might be thought that he was an elderly or old man, for his signature to the letters is of a singularly tottering and infirm character, as though written by one suffering from paralysis. But the fact is he was only fifteen years older than she.

The Indian lady had Indian friends in London, who lived in Gerrard Street. These were Commodore James and his wife; the former an officer of some distinction, who

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had served in many adventurous expeditions on the Indian coast, where sailors had to be as much soldiers as sailors; and whose deeds are fully described by the historian, Orme. In that work, which at that time was just published, the name of Commodore James occurs frequently. They seem to have been kind, excellent, hospitable persons, and warm friends both of Mr Sterne and of Mrs Draper; and at their house in Gerrard Street, it seems more than probable, Yorick first met Eliza. He was to become later Sir William James, and chairman of the East India Company; and the only little fact of his London life that I can discover, shows him befriending the unfortunate Colonel Frederick, who was son to the famous adventurer Theodore, King of Corsica, and calling a private meeting of friends at Gerrard Street, to raise a subscription for his benefit. He seems to have been a brave soldier and a kindly friend.

As usual, and following out his principle of ever having some Dulcinea in his head, Mr Sterne gave full reins to his sentimental passion. As with the Paris lady, he 'deliciously cantered away with it, always upon my haunches along the street.' He followed it

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out in many tender phases, with his usual thoughtless, reckless fashion. The public, the ostentatious way in which he brought this grand passion and its incidents before all his friends — before the sober and correct, as well as the more free — and even before the public, shows plainly that he considered himself a privileged sentimentalist. More questionable affairs are not thrust thus into the light of day. By-and-by Mr Sterne was inviting all the world to listen to the sorrows of his sentimental passion. As it was, London society began to talk; and an officious but well-meaning person, flush of English news, passing by Marseilles, where were Mrs Sterne and her daughter, had the cruelty and bad taste to inform them of the new scandal that was then amusing London.

The sick lady had the spirit to reply ‘that she wished not to be informed, and urged that he would drop the subject.’ The young girl herself wrote to her father how uneasy her mother was on the subject. The subject was indeed unsuitable for one of her years. But this was one of the painful complications into which her father’s follies led him. He wrote back to her that he honoured Mrs Sterne for

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her answer; and then — to his own child — entered on a sort of justification of himself. ‘ ’Tis true I have a friendship for her; but not to infatuation. — I believe I have judgment enough to discern hers and every woman’s “faults.” ’ He then heartily wishes ‘ he had her with him to introduce her to his friends, the James’s,’ whose portraits he sketches for her. He ‘is as worthy a man as I ever met. He possesses every manly virtue — honour and bravery are his characteristics, which have distinguished him nobly in several instances.’ Mrs James ‘is the most amiable and gentlest of beings,’ and ‘of so sweet a disposition that she is too good for the world. Just God!’ adds Mr Sterne, ‘if *all were like her!* Heaven, my Lydia, for some wise purpose, has created different beings.’ An allusion there is no mistaking.

Mrs James had probably introduced him to their *protégée*. These worthy people do not appear to have seen any harm in this behaviour, or at least did not interfere, probably accepting the clergyman’s interest as semi-paternal or semi-religious. But the affair was beginning to be talked of, and certain friends in the City, in the absent Draper’s

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interest, remonstrated with 'the Brahmine' — Mr Sterne's pet name for her — on her indiscretion. This threw her admirer into a fury. His hatred to these people was indeed extraordinary. He returned again and again to them. 'I would not give ninepence,' he said angrily, 'for the picture of you they have got executed; it is that of a conceited, made-up coquette. Your eyes and the shape of your face, the latter the most perfect oval I ever saw, which are perfections that must strike the most indifferent judge, because they are equal to any of God's works in a similar way, and finer than any I beheld in all my travels — are manifestly inspired by *the affected leer of the one and strange appearance of the other.*'

This combination of animosity and flattery is amusing, and calculated to have telling effect on the mind of a foolish or impressionable heroine. All this, as he confessed later, was an entire fiction; he had invented the whole story because 'they used their endeavours with her to break off her friendship with me, for reasons I will not write, but tell you.' Mrs James knew nothing of their 'baseness.' The reasons given by him

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for this advice to break off her intimacy with them might certainly have been given by Tartuffe. 'Forgive my zeal, dear girl, and allow me right, which arises only out of that fund of affection I have, and shall preserve for thee to the hour of my death. I think you a very deserving woman, and that you want nothing but firmness, and a better opinion of yourself, to be the best female character I know.' But his philanthropic efforts did not succeed, and the Brahmine declined to give up her friends.

Presently her health seemed to grow worse, and Daniel Draper was insisting on her returning to him. This was not from any rumours having reached him — there was not time for that, the intimacy having only lasted a few months. She resolved to set off, prepared for the voyage, on the eve of which Mr Sterne seems to have begun that characteristic correspondence later known as that of 'Yorick and Eliza.' These letters were sent to her up to the time of the sailing, and they are certainly original and characteristic.

He used to write to her at all seasons. On returning from a dinner-party, the artful Lothario, adroitly touching every note of

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the sympathetic gamut so as to excite an interest in himself, would write thus: 'Best of all good girls, the sufferings I sustained last night on account of thine, Eliza, are beyond my powers. Thou hast been bowed down, my child, with every burden that sorrow of heart and pain of body could inflict on a poor being. Fear nothing, my dear; hope everything; and the balm of this passion will shed its influence on thy health, and make thee enjoy a spring of youth and cheerfulness, more than thou hast hardly yet tasted.'

All these evils, of course, were awaiting her on her arrival at Bombay; but the 'balm of this passion' (for him, the Reverend Laurence) was to be her solace. He, indeed, rarely omits a judicious stroke at Daniel Draper, Esquire. 'Trust my declaration, Eliza, that thy husband (*if he is the good feeling man I wish him*) will press thee to him with more honest warmth and affection than he would be able to do in *the best bloom* of thy beauty—and so he ought. I pity him—he must have strange feelings if he knows not the value of such a creature as thou art.'

At last the moment came for separation,

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and the outward-bound Indiaman was about to sail from Deal. Mr Sterne took great pains in looking after some little comforts for the voyage, screws for her cabin, etc.; writing also to the pilot, Abraham Walker.

She was really ill, but prepared at once for her voyage. She was to leave her children behind, and her passage was taken in the *Earl of Chatham*, which was to sail about the beginning of April. The day of departure came at last, and she had to go down to Deal, off which coast the vessel was lying, to wait until the signal for embarkation should be given. Mr Sterne then began to write those famous love-letters which have been translated into nearly every European language; and continued to write them until the *Earl of Chatham* weighed anchor and stood out to sea.

He wrote a curious letter to his daughter just after his departure which offers an odd jumble of feelings:

‘ BOND STREET, *April* 9, 1767.

‘ This letter, my dear Lydia, will distress thy good heart, for from the beginning thou wilt perceive no entertaining strokes of hu-

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mour in it — I cannot be chearful when a thousand melancholy ideas surround me — I have met with a loss of near fifty pounds, which I was taken in for in an extraordinary manner — but what is that loss in comparison of one I may experience? — Friendship is the balm and cordial of life, and without it, 'tis a heavy load not worth sustaining. — I am unhappy — thy mother and thyself at a distance from me, and what can compensate for such a destitution? — For God's sake persuade her to come and fix in England, for life is too short to waste in separation — and whilst she lives in one country, and I in another, many people will suppose it proceeds from choice — besides I want thee near me, thou child and darling of my heart! — I am in a melancholy mood, and my Lydia's eyes will smart with weeping when I tell her the cause that now affects me. — I am apprehensive the dear friend I mentioned in my last letter is going into a decline — I was with her two days ago, and I never beheld a being so altered — she has a tender frame, and looks like a drooping lily, for the roses are fled from her cheeks — I can never see or talk to this incomparable woman without bursting

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into tears——I have a thousand obligations to her, and I owe her more than her whole sex, if not all the world put together. — She has a delicacy in her way of thinking that few possess — our conversations are of the most interesting nature, and she talks to me of quitting this world with more composure than others think of living in it. — I have wrote an epitaph, of which I send thee a copy. — 'Tis expressive of her modest worth — but may heav'n restore her! and may she live to write mine.

‘Columns, and labour’d urns but vainly shew,
An idle scene of decorated woe.
The sweet companion, and the friend sincere,
Need no mechanic help to force the tear.
In heart-felt numbers, never meant to shine,
’Twill flow eternal o’er a hearse like thine;
’Twill flow, whilst gentle goodness has one *friend*,
Or kindred tempers have a tear to lend.’

Mrs Draper, was now writing details about the ship and her fellow-passengers. There was a Miss Light going with her, — a lady who afterwards married ‘George Stratton, Esquire.’ She was taking out her pianoforte and a guitar; and Mr Sterne, a known musician himself, went to Zumpe’s, a maker of the period, and obtained some directions from

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him in reference to the tuning of both instruments. Down at York, the Rev. Mr Mason had a 'Zumpe' also, which he lent to Gray, and the high notes of which were 'somewhat dry and sticky.' This instrument Mr Sterne must have seen. He got her a hammer and pliers to twist her wire with, and 'may every one of them, my dear, vibrate sweet comfort to thy hopes.' He also got her 'ten handsome brass screws to hang your necessities upon.' There were twelve originally, but he stole a couple from 'you to put up in my own cabin at Coxwold. I shall never hang or take my hat off one of them but I shall think of you.' He also wrote 'Mr Abraham Walker, pilot at Deal,' to receive all those articles on the arrival of the Deal machine, and bid him look out for a serviceable arm-chair in that town, and send it on board.

He continues to write steadily every day — sometimes in a strain of simplicity that provokes a smile, and suggests the mixture of sentiment and 'bread and butter' in Goethe's 'Charlotte.' Thus he dwells at length on the painting of her cabin. 'O! I grieve for your cabin; and fresh painting will be enough to

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destroy every nerve about thee. Take care of yourself, my dear girl, and sleep not in it too soon; 'twill be enough to give you a stroke of epilepsy.' And later he asks, 'Why may not clean washing and rubbing do?'

He promised to write every post until she finally set sail. He bids her put all his letters 'into some order.' The first eight or nine were numbered,* but the rest she will be able to arrange 'by the day or hour which, *I hope*, I have generally prefixed.'

Among the passengers, too, was 'a young soldier,' whom Mrs Draper described as 'susceptible of tender impressions.' Mr Sterne would seem to have been uneasy on the score of this 'young soldier,' and was disturbed by the way his approaches were received: though he admits 'there was no shutting the door against him either in politeness or humanity.' In a sort of apologetic fashion, Eliza had hinted that 'before Miss Light had sailed a fortnight, he will be in love with her.' 'But,' says Mr Sterne, 'five months with Eliza, and in the same room, and with an amorous son of Mars!' And

* There are only, properly speaking, four given previous to this letter, so a good many must have been lost.

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then thinking of some negro character at the Theatre, adds, '*It can no be Masser.*' 'But thy discretion, thy wisdom, thy honour—the spirit of thy honour.'

As the day for sailing drew near, Mrs Draper's illness increased, and her friends became alarmed. 'Mr Sterne pressed upon her the necessity of putting off her voyage; he was sure her husband, when he knew the true state of the case, could not object.' Her physician had indeed ordered her 'the pure southern air of France, or milder Naples;' so that the country to which she was hurrying was scarcely a suitable residence. But there was 'a Mr B——' standing by—an Indian, it is to be presumed—who seems to have drawn a not very encouraging picture of Mr Draper's impatience. Mr Sterne was afraid that this gentleman 'had exaggerated matters.' He did not like his face, 'it is absolutely killing; should evil befall thee, what will he have not to answer for.' He again pressed her to delay her journey. 'If thou art so very ill, put off all thoughts of returning to India this year; write to your husband; tell him the truth of your case. *If he is the generous, humane man you de-*

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scribe him to be, he cannot but applaud your conduct.'

Speaking of her cabin friends, who he is afraid 'are only genteel by comparison with the contrasted crew with which she must behold them,' he returns again to the obnoxious City people. 'So was you know who, from the same fallacy that was put upon the judgment——but I will not mortify you.' It has been assumed that this was a sneer at Daniel Draper, Esq., Councillor at Bombay, and who was so much respected 'in that quarter of the globe.'

Mr Thackeray was very bitter on this 'you know who,' also assuming that the reference was to her husband. It will be seen he was referring to the persons whom he had warned her against, and that 'strange infatuation' the 'fallacy that had been put upon her judgment' by the '——'s.'

Mr Sterne follows up his proposition:—
'Tis true *I am ninety-five in constitution*, and you but twenty-five—rather too great a disparity this! but what I want in youth I will make up in wit and good humour. Not Swift so loved his Stella, Scarron his Maintenon, or Waller his Sacharissa, as I will love and sing

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thee, my wife elect. All these names, eminent as they were, shall give place to thine, Eliza.

‘Tell me in answer to this that you approve and honour the proposal; and that you would (like the Spectator’s mistress) have more joy in putting on an old man’s slipper, than in associating with the gay, the voluptuous, and the young. Adieu! my Simplicia.

‘Yours,

‘TRISTRAM.’

At this moment of departure he threw out some mysterious promises and declarations. ‘May poverty, distress, anguish, and shame be my portion if ever I give thee reason to repent the knowledge of me.’ ‘With this asservation, made in the presence of a just God, *I pray to Him that so it may speed with me as I deal candidly and honourably with thee.* Remember that, while I have life and power, whatever is mine you may style and think yours; *though sorry should I be if ever my friendship was put to the test thus,* for your own delicacy’s sake’ — an amusing qualification of generosity.

‘I will live for thee and my Lydia, be rich

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for the dear children of my heart, gain wisdom, gain fame and happiness, to share them with thee and her in my old age. Once for all, adieu; preserve thy life steadily, *pursue the ends we proposed*, and let nothing rob thee of those powers Heaven has given thee for thy well-being.' This seems to point to a future marriage. He had already jocularly hinted at it: 'Talking of widows,' he writes in a significant passage, 'if ever you are such, do not think of giving yourself to some wealthy nabob, because I design to marry you myself. My wife cannot live long, and I know not anyone I should like so well for her substitute as yourself.' Mrs Sterne was at the time in wretched health, and often within measurable distance of death so that this amiable suggestion was not merely Utopian.

'But, Eliza, if thou art so very ill, still put off all thoughts of returning to India this year. Write to your husband; tell him the truth of your case. *If he is the generous, humane man you describe him to be*, he cannot but applaud your conduct. I am creditably informed that his repugnance to your living in England arises only from the dread

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which has entered his brain that thou mayest run him into debt beyond thy appointments, and that he must discharge them. That such a creature should be sacrificed for the paltry consideration of a few hundreds is too, too hard! Oh! my child, that I could with propriety indemnify him for every charge, even to the last mite, that thou hast been of to him! With joy would I give him my whole subsistence — nay, *sequester my livings*, and trust to the treasures Heaven has furnished my head with for a future subsistence.' This seems plain speaking enough. He would send for his wife and daughter, and they would all travel together on the Continent — '*fish on the banks of the Arno*,' which suggests Shelley who made exactly the same suggestion to his wife when he eloped with Mary Godwin. He would prescribe for her gratis, the rogue! 'You are not the first woman by many I have done so for with success!'

On Eliza's departure from London, Mr Sterne began to keep a journal of his doings in London, specially written to amuse her, and which he sent in portions to her. This was described as a vivacious and entertaining record, though it has never been published.

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It was shown to Mr Thackeray by its possessor, Mr Gibbs, of Bath, who also showed it to the present writer. It was curious to hold in one's hand this substantial record, and look at the crowded and faded characters, written on huge sheets of foolscap. 'Upon the death of my father,' says Mr Gibbs, 'when I was eleven years old, a pile of old account books, letters, commonplace books, and other papers of no documentary value, was set aside as waste, and placed in a room where I used to play. I looked through the papers, and found the journal and letters. An early fondness for reading had made me acquainted with the well-known extracts from the writings of Sterne — *The Scurd*, *The Monk*, *Le Fevre*, and a small book containing the "Letters of Yorick and Eliza" — and finding these names in the letters and book, I took all I could find and obtained permission to preserve them, and they have been in my possession ever since. How they came into the hands of my father, who was a great reader and had a large collection of old books, I never had any means of knowing.' He added the curious incident that it was discovered in a plate-warmer! The journal is

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full of extraordinary incident, and from a hurried perusal, or snatch of perusal, it can be seen that it was written in Sterne's most characteristic manner.

'I have found,' Mr Gibbs writes to me, 'some difficulty in looking over Sterne's Journal in selecting a few extracts characteristic of him, for they are all characteristic, in the true Shandean style. I have copied the enclosed for you, preserving the original spelling, capital letters, and punctuation, and hope you will be pleased with the specimen. The lot was given me to cut up into spills to light candles with; but as I had read of Yorick and Eliza I looked over and kept these. The journal is a continuation of one begun when Eliza sailed for India, and of which the former portion was, it appears, sent to her. I wonder what became of it.'

It is strange that Thackeray should have made no use of it. Mr Gibbs is 'the gentleman of Bath' alluded to in the lectures on 'The Four Georges,'* and in a pleasing paper, marked by sound critical instinct and research,

* [Not in "The Four Georges," but in *A Roundabout Journey: Notes of a Week's Holiday* (Cornhill Magazine, November, 1760). Consult "Thackeray and the Journal" in the "Introduction" to *The Journal to Eliza* in this edition of Sterne.]

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addressed to a literary society, he furnished some interesting extracts from this curious record. ‘It consists,’ he says, ‘of assurances of his most fervent attachment; reiterated hopes for her return to England, and for the re-establishment of their health, and for their eventual union. With these are blended recitals of his frequent illnesses, the bursting of blood-vessels in the lungs, complaints of his wife’s unceasing efforts to get all the money she could from him, with incidents of his journey and visits.’ It shows that the luckless clergyman was really suffering from his hopeless passion, which he did not attempt to control. It begins:—

‘*April* 13. — Wrote the last Farewell to Eliza by Mr Watts, who sails this Day for Bombay — inclosed her likewise th journal kept from th day we parted, to this — so from hence continue it till th time we meet again — Eliza does th same, so we shall have mutual testimonies to deliver hereafter to each other; That the Sun has not more constantly rose & set upon th earth than we have thought of, & remembered what is more cheering than life itself — Eternal Sunshine! Eliza, dark to me is all this world without thee & most

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heavily will every hour pass over my head, till that is come which brings thee, dear Woman, back to Albion!

‘Dined with Hall &c at the Brawn’s Head. the whole Pandemonium assembled. — supp’d together at Hall’s — worn out both in body & mind & paid a severe reckoning all the night.

‘A day dedicated to Abstinence & Reflection — & what object will employ the greatest part of mine, full well does my Eliza know.

‘*May 22.* — Left Bond St & London this morning.

‘23. — Bear my journey badly. — ill & dispirited all th way — staid two days on the road at the A — Bishop of York’s — shewd his Grace & his Lady & sisters your Portrait with a short but interesting story of my friendship for the Original — kindly nursed & honor’d by both — Arrived at my Thatched Cottage, the 28th of May.’

This archbishop was always friendly to him, and perhaps felt indulgently towards his follies, wishing perhaps to hold some control over him. It may be doubted, however, if he were as tolerant as he is represented in this little scene.

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When he reached home he became a prey to the most overpowering dejection, and his state was truly pitiable. The mercurial Yorick, it will be seen, could only turn for relief to his favourite distraction, Eliza.

‘*July* 12. — Am ill all day with th Impressions of yesterdy’s accont — can neithr eat or drink or sit still & write or read. I walk like a disturbed spirit abt my garden calling up Heaven & thee to come to my succour. Couldst thou but write one word to me it would be worth half the world to me — my friends write me millions — and evry one writes me to flee from my solitude and come to them — I obey th commands of my friend Hall who has sent over on purpose to fetch me — or else will come himself for me. So I set off to-morrow to take sanctuary in Crazy Castle — The Newspapers have sent me there alredy by putting in the following paragraph : —

“We hear from Yorkshire that Skelton Castle is the present Rendezvous of the most brilliant wits of the age — the admired Author of *Tristram*, Mr Garrick, &c. being there ; and Mr Coleman and many other men of wit & learning being every day expected.”

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‘When I get there, which will be to-morrow night, my Eliza will hear from her Yorick.’

Mr Sterne now tells his Brahmine that he is expecting a visit from his wife and daughter, but, he complains bitterly that they were coming ‘to fleece and pillage him.’ A settlement was to be made on Mrs Sterne; an estate was to be sold, but they were to settle themselves in France.

‘I’m truly acquiescent,’ he adds, ‘tho’ I lose the contingency of surviving them — but ’tis no matter — I shall have enough — and a hundred or two hundred pounds for Eliza whenever She will honor me with putting her hand into my Purse.’

In the midst of his probably genuine grief at the loss of the Brahmine, he would condescend to some devices that cause a smile, and which he little dreamed would one day be revealed to the world. As we have hinted before, it turns out that some of the most impassioned portions of the letters sent to her were literal copies of his own love-letters addressed to Mrs Sterne thirty years before! It is said that the second Mrs Sheridan made a mortifying discovery of the same kind. The

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following passage is the same in both, almost word for word:—

‘I have just been eating my chicking, Sitting over it with tears a bitter sauce Eliza’ (‘my L.’ in the first copy). ‘When Molly (Fanny) spread the table cloth, my heart fainted within me—one solitary plate, one knife, one fork, one glass, &c.’ After giving a ‘thousand pensive penetrating looks’ at the arm-chair (in the case of both the ladies), ‘I laid down my knife and fork, took out my handkerchief, clap’t it across my face, and wept like a child’—which is all verbatim with the old text. A female sympathising friend, Fanny, becomes Mrs James in the new version, who is represented as comforting and holding out hopes of a speedy union. This was not warrantable, and was only one of his many fictions as to Mrs James, who, he knew, had great influence with his inamorato. It was probably the discovery of this and other tricks, with perhaps the failure of his undertaking to leave her money in his will, that excited the bitter animosity of Mrs Draper, expressed after his death.

He was always attached to his daughter, and her visit seems to have had the effect

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of softening him, even to her mother. He writes of her to Eliza: 'Never—has she vowed—will she give me another sorrowful or discontented hour. I have conquer'd her as I would every one else by humanity and generosity, & she leaves me more than half in love with me. She goes into the South of France, her health being insupportable in England and her age—as *she now confesses ten years more than I thought*—“an adroit stroke this” being on the edge of sixty. So God Bless & make the remainder of her life happy.'

The last words in this curious journal are:—

'What can I say—of what can I write, but the yearnings of a heart wasted with looking & wishing for your return.'

Mr Sterne's parting utterances were of what must be called rather a 'canting' sort.

'I probably shall never see you more; yet flatter myself you will sometimes think of me with pleasure, because you must be convinced I love you; *and so interest myself in your rectitude, that I had rather hear of any evil befalling you, than any want of reverence for yourself.*' He makes these assertions 'in the

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presence of a just God.' 'May the God of kindness be kind to, and approve himself thy protector; and for thy daily comfort bear in mind this truth, that whatever measure of sorrow and dulness is thy portion, it will be repaid to thee in full measure of happiness by the Being thou hast wisely chosen for *thy eternal friend*.'

He concludes another of his letters in this way,— 'What can I add more in the agitation of mind I am in, and within five minutes of the last postman's bell, *but to recommend thee to Heaven, and recommend myself to Him with thee*, in the same fervent ejaculation? That we may be happy and meet again — if not *in this world, in the next*.'

His last words to her were of the same character,— 'Adieu! adieu! and with my adieus let me give thee one straight rule of conduct that thou hast *heard from my lips in a thousand forms, but I centre it in one word*: Reverence thyself. I shall probably never see you more!' This he must have known was the probability, as indeed it proved the certainty. About this time he was being visited with forebodings of his own approaching end, and those fatal consumptive tokens

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which had clung to him now for so many years, and were becoming more prominent every day, must have been significant warnings. Mrs Draper, too, was in miserable health, and scarcely seemed likely to survive the voyage. A voyage to India, too, at this date was a serious undertaking, very costly and tedious. A furlough to Europe was a rare pleasure, and the mere travelling home and out again in the lumbering Indiamen of the day, covered a serious span of human life. When therefore was Mrs Draper to think of visiting England and seeing Yorick again?

A plain, prosaic newspaper scrap — an extract from the shipping news of the day, contains the last scene in this little history : — ‘*Deal, April 3, wind N.E., came down and sailed with his majesty’s ship *Twced*, *Merlin* sloop, and all the outward-bound, *Lord Chatham* East Indiaman, *Susannah Hays*, for Cadiz, and *Beaver Hamstrom*, for Venice.*’

In the following year, when Sterne died in a lonely, miserable way at his Bond Street lodgings, and thus his complacent anticipations of outliving Daniel Draper, his own wife, and Mrs Draper herself were com-

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pletely falsified, 'Eliza's' adventures began. She soon discovered, either from letters from England or from what she heard at Bombay, that the admirer of whom she had been the idol was, after all, only of clay. Writing to a friend, in 1772 — and I have seen this voluminous document of five or six folio sheets, a 'ship letter,'* in short — she makes this confession: 'I believed Sterne, implicitly I believed him; I had no motive to do otherwise than believe him just, generous, and unhappy — till his death gave me to know that he was tainted with *the vices of injustice, meanness, and folly.*' She was thinking of his solemn asseveration made so profanely 'in the presence of God.' And again: 'I was almost an idolator of his worth, while I fancied him the mild, generous, good Yorick we had so often thought him to be.'

What could have been the revelation which thus opened Eliza's eyes? Had she learned from the Jameses of that ingenious untruth — of his 'falsity' in reference to his city friends? Yet this would have been rather flattering to her vanity. Or had certain

* [This "ship letter" and other letters of Mrs Draper are given in the volume entitled *The Journal to Eliza.*]

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communications been made to Mr Daniel Draper by the humorist — for a draft letter which Mr Gibbs found seems to show that Yorick, in his anxiety to propitiate the husband, was inclined to slight the wife? ‘The draft remains unfinished,’ Mr Gibbs says, ‘and most probably the letter was never sent . . . it has been much altered, and left in some places without connection, and is (as nearly as it can be copied) as follows : —

‘I own it, sir, that the writing a letter to a gentleman I have not the honour to be known to: a letter likewise upon no kind of business (in the ideas of the world) is a little out of the common course of things; but I’m so myself, and the impulse which makes me take up my pen is out of the common way too — for it arises from the honest pain I should feel in having so great esteem and friendship as I bear for Mrs Draper, if I did not wish to hope and extend it to Mr Draper also. I am really, dear sir, in love with your wife; but ’tis a love you would honour me for, for ’tis so like that I bear my own daughter, who is a good creature, that I scarce distinguish a

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difference betwixt it — the moment I had would have been the last.

‘I wish it had been in my power to have been of true use to Mrs Draper at this distance from her best protector. I have bestowed a great deal of pains (or rather, I should say, pleasure) upon her head — her heart needs none — and her head as little as any daughter of Eve’s, and indeed less than any it has been my fate to converse with for some years. I wish I could make myself of any service to Mrs D. whilst she is in India, and I in the world — for worldly affairs I would be of none. I wish you, dear sir, many years’ happiness. ’Tis a part of my litany to pray for her health and life. She is too good to be lost, and I would out of pure zeal take a pilgrimage to Mecca to seek a medicine.’

But it would seem more likely that Eliza’s hostility was produced by some communication from the widow and daughter with whom she was presently at strife. The widow and neglected wife, a cross invalid, was likely to feel bitterly towards her. There was no love, certainly, lost between them.

Now there was a letter of her father’s in

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Lydia's possession in which he speaks of an accusation of Mrs Sterne's, that in case of his death he intended leaving his daughter to the care of Mrs Draper, a rumour he disposed of indignantly. 'She could know little of my feelings. No, my Lydia, 'tis a lady whose virtues I wish thee to imitate that I shall entrust my girl to — nor will she put my Lydia under the painful necessity to fly to India for protection.' Mrs Draper seems to have had some idea that he contemplated this arrangement by her offer to receive Lydia. However this may be, nothing is more likely than that the widow took care to tell her now this indiscreet and too candid opinion of her late husband in reference to his 'Brahmine.'

'Her violence of temper (indeed, I wish not to recriminate or be severe just now) and the hatefulness of her character, were strongly urged to me as the cause of his indifferent health, the whole of his misfortunes, and the evils that would probably shorten his life. The visit Mrs Sterne meditated some time antecedent to his death he most pathetically lamented, as an adventure that would wound his peace and greatly embarrass his circumstances — the former on account of the eye-

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witness he should be to his child's affections having been alienated from him by the artful misrepresentations of her mother, under whose tutorage she had ever been, and the latter from the rapacity of her disposition, for "*well do I know,*" says he, "*that the sole intent of her visit is to fleece me.* Had I money enough, I would buy off her journey, as I have done several others, but till my sentimental work is published I shall not have a single sou more than will indemnify people for my immediate expenses."'

We may interrupt her letter to quote one of Mr Sterne's to his daughter, which shows Yorick's duplicity: 'I am unhappy. Thy mother and thyself are at a distance from me, and what can compensate for such a destitution? For God's sake, persuade her to come and fix in England, for life is too short to waste in separation!'

Mrs Draper's letter goes on: 'The very first ship which left us afterwards' (*i. e.*, after Sterne's death) 'I wrote to Miss Sterne by, and with all the freedom which my intimacy with her father and his communications warranted. How could I with any kind of delicacy mention a person who was hateful to my

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departed friend, when for the sake of that very friend I wished to confer a kindness on his daughter, and to enhance the value of it solicited her society and consent to share my prospects, as the highest favour which could be shown to myself? Indeed I knew not, but Mrs Sterne, from the description I had received of her, might be no more, or privately confined, if in being, owing to a malady which I have been told the violence of her temper subjects her to.' She, assisted by a Colonel Campbell, set on foot a subscription for the family at Bombay; and, as he was about to visit England, she recommended him as an eligible suitor for Miss Lydia's hand.

Some years passed by, and Mrs Draper was alarmed by other symptoms of hostility. As Yorick had written to her in a warm strain so had she responded, and she now discovered that her letters had not been destroyed, and were in the possession of Mrs Sterne. That these were of a compromising kind, and not likely to make her position comfortable in reference to Commissioner Draper, is evident from her genuine alarm, and the efforts she made to prevent their publication. As she wrote to the Jameses:

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‘To add to my regret for his loss, his widow had my letters in her power (I never entertained a good opinion of her), and meant to subject me to disgrace and inconvenience by the publication of them. You know not the contents of these letters, and it was natural for you to form the worst judgment of them when those who had seen ’em reported them unfavourably, and were disposed to dislike me on that account. My dear girl, had I not cause to feel humbled so circumstanced, and can you wonder at my sensations communicating themselves to my pen ?

‘I have heard some anecdotes extremely disadvantageous to the characters of the widow and daughter, and that from persons who said they had been personally acquainted with them both in France and England. . . . Some part of their intelligence corroborated what I had a thousand times heard from the lips of Yorick, almost invariably repeated. . . . The secret of my letters, being in her hands, had somehow become extremely public ; it was noticed to me by almost every acquaintance I had in the English ships or at this settlement. This alarmed me, for at that time I had never communicated the

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circumstance, and could not suspect you of acting by me in any manner which I would not have acted in by myself. One gentleman in particular told me that both you and I should be deceived if we had the least reliance on the honour or principles of Mrs Sterne, for that, when she had secured as much as she could for suppressing the correspondence, she was capable of selling it to a bookseller afterwards — by either refusing to restore it to you, or taking copies of it without our knowledge — and therefore he advised me, if I was averse to its publication, to take every means in my power of suppressing it. This influenced me to write to Becket and promise him a reward equal to his expectations if he would deliver the letters to you.'

The efforts of her kind friends appear to have succeeded, for the letters have never seen the light, though a sort of spurious catch-penny publication was impudently issued in her name, written, it is to be believed, by that notorious fabricator, Coombe.

It will be seen so far that Eliza was something of an *intriguante*, no doubt owing to her Eastern birth and associations.

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The escapade that next followed in her career rather enfeebles the purely Platonic colour of the Yorick and Eliza episode; yet had he not enjoined her, 'Reverence thyself'?

Douglas, a 'writer' in Bombay, tells us that Mr Draper was a regular Indian, having been born in one of the Company's factories near Cape Commorin. He was appointed assistant paymaster. In 1762, he went with his wife to England.* The writer describes him as 'a very noble and good-humoured man, so dastardly forsaken in the elopement from Mazagon.' Daniel Draper after being promoted to be chief of the factory at Surat, about 1772 had returned once more to Bombay, where he lived at Belvedere House, a handsome residence, remarkable—as Major Wallace describes it, who has written a pleasant book of Indian travels—'for its fine situation, close to the bay, and for the grand prospect.' This situation was unfortunate, in one sense, for the owner. It was well known

* The death of poor Draper took place in March 1805, at St James Street. He was seventy-seven years old when he was Second Counsellor at Bombay. [The account of Draper given here contains some inaccuracies. He was born, *not* in India, but in England. He came to England with his wife *not* in 1762, but in 1765.]

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that Mr Draper was unhappy in not being the object of his wife's love.' A writer in the *Times of India* many years ago told what followed, collected from well-known traditions of the place:—

‘There lay off Mazagon a king's cutter or sloop of war, commanded by a captain of the Royal Navy. Whether the captain had been a frequent visitor at the Counsellor's bungalow tradition does not tell; but it is plain there had been communications between the ship and that no doubt most hospitable mansion, so ruthlessly destroyed only a few years back. It is said that one day, whilst Daniel was securely taking his *siesta*, “his custom of an afternoon,” his spouse stepped to the water side, where a boat from the king's ship awaited her, and to that stronghold of the waters she was taken.’

Major Wallace, however, gives her story a more romantic cast. ‘Having persuaded,’ he says, ‘a gallant captain in the Navy to convey her to England on board his vessel, she was so closely watched that she had to escape by means of a ladder of ropes suspended from her bed-chamber verandah,

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which enabled her at once to jump into the boat and into the arms of her new protector.' Douglas gives the name of the captain — Sir J. Clarke. And thus Yorick's beautiful and sentimental teaching bore fruit.

It is said that Mr Draper 'proceeded to put in force every available resource for pursuit of the fair fugitive, issuing a proclamation against the captain, and ordering one or more of the Indian navy ships to scour the seas and pursue after the buccaneer.' About 1874 Belvedere House, the scene of this escapade, was pulled down, owing to the ground being wanted for local improvements.

It is not surprising to find that the vanity of our heroine was such that in course of time she became eager to let her connection with Sterne be known, and she allowed copies of her famous correspondence to be taken by friends. A certain Captain I——, who was acquainted with her in India, used to relate how he succeeded in obtaining a copy of these famous letters. 'Being a woman,' he says, 'of a lively disposition and engaging manners, her society was much esteemed and eagerly sought after, though

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she usually confined herself to a fixed circle.' He one day mentioned to her that copies of a correspondence between her and Sterne had been shown to him in England, and that he thought that hers were as good as Sterne's. Mrs Draper replied that no letters had passed between them. On which the captain confessed that when sailing for India he had gone to see Abraham Walker, the Deal pilot, who showed him Sterne's letter, recommending Eliza to his care, but he would not sell it nor allow a copy to be taken. She replied laughingly, 'You deserve to know a secret for the pains you take to discover it.' She then gave him a copy of the correspondence, assuring him that the motive of her denial was to protect herself from too curious inquiries. The captain took the letters with him to England, but they were destroyed in a curious way, someone having poured an acid into his desk with a view of destroying some important legal documents.

No doubt this exhibition of anxiety to secure her letters tickled the vanity of the heroine and tempted her into this indiscretion. The next step was to print them.

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The lady came to England, and a publisher issued them, from whose statement it would appear that she had formally authorised this publication.

‘It is very much to be lamented,’ he says, ‘that Eliza’s modesty was invincible to all the publisher’s endeavours to obtain her answers to those letters; her wit, penetration, and judgment, her happiness in the epistolary style, so rapturously commended by Mr Sterne, could not fail to furnish a rich entertainment for the public. The publisher could not help telling her that he wished to God she really was possessed of that vanity with which she was charged: to which she replied that she was so far from acquitting herself of vanity, that she suspected that to be the cause why she could not prevail on herself to submit her letters to the public eye; for although Mr Sterne was partial to everything of hers, she could not hope that the world would be so too.’

Mr Wilkes was one of her friends — and perhaps admirers — and this may have been one of the reasons that interfered with his undertaking his life. We have this rather sensible letter of hers to ‘the patriot’: —

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‘I thank you for the French volume, Mr Wilkes, and I really feel myself obliged for the English pages; tho’ the Eulogium which accompanied them makes me half afraid of indulging in something which I presume to call taste for the pleasure of wit and conversation, as there is nothing which I ought to be more apprehensive of than Praise from distinguished persons because it ever has had too powerful an effect on my imagination to render me capable of aspiring to merit in capital instances. I say not this with a view to disqualify and extort refinements in flattery, but from such a consciousness of my own imbecility as makes me very serious when reduced to the necessity of self-examination. If, therefore, you have the generosity which I take you to have, you will rather endeavour to correct my *foiblesse* than to add to it by your encomiums. I request my compliments, if you please, to Miss Wilkes, and am your much obliged and most obedient,

‘ELIZA DRAPER.

‘SUNDAY AFTERNOON, *Mar. 22.*’

There is another letter of hers, signed ‘your grateful child,’ eight pages long — a

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regular 'ship's' letter—and which is written in a quiet, sensible strain. I give some portions of it.

‘He (Draper) has lost his two clerks, and if I was not capable of assisting & maintaining his correspondence for him, I know not what he would do at this juncture. I only fulfil my duty, & have not the least merit in it—as a good Purvoo, that thoroughly understood English, and spelled properly, would answer his views still better. Louisa is very advantageously married to the Commander of our Forces, a Colonel Pemble: he is handsome, amiable, and magnificent in his temper: his income amounts to 30,000 Rupees a year: but I fear they stand little chance of saving a fortune, as they are gay, extravagant, & fond of company, but I know not if it signifies much, as they love India, are healthy, admired, and esteemed here, and not very desirous of exchanging affluence in the Eastern clime. They are on no terms with the Governor, neither visiting or being visited by him. . . . I hope to be favoured with long and interesting letters from Europe by our next

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ship. England, which was always dear to me, was never so much so as now! The welfare of my dear children sits very near my heart, & I cannot help feeling great anxiety on their account, tho' I am confident of Mrs Whitehall's care & best attention to their true interest. God preserve the poor Babes. May they live to give satisfaction to their parents, and reflect honor on their amiable Protectors. I hope you had an agreeable summer in the society of my friend & little (?) by presenting my compliments to him, & best wishes for his health & enjoyment of England. We now wish him our head again. Would to heaven he had not left us a prey to the foolish policy and low cunning of a Hodges. The wish is entirely general — not a moist eye or grave countenance will be visible on his departure. O, he is gloriously hated and, I prognosticate, ever will be so, even by the wife of his bosom, if he is dotard enough with his jealous propensities & selfish particularities to make a second choice. But no — his avarice will prevent his marrying again; for a good woman would loathe his wealth with such an incumbrance as him-

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self—and a bad one . . . happy — prays your
ever grateful child . . . — ELIZA DRAPER.

‘TELLICHERRY, *Ap.* 1769.

‘*P. S.* — Mr Draper presents his most respectful compliments, with the sincerest assurances of his doing everything in his power for Stephen, if you send him to Bombay.’

It was during her residence in England that Eliza became acquainted with the Abbé Raynal, who celebrates her charms and merits, as we have seen, in some extraordinary raptures. ‘Men declared,’ he says, ‘that no woman ever possessed so many graces, and even her own sex, which was rare, joined in their praise.’ Yet she was ‘only good-looking — not very good-looking.’ She it was who inspired all his works, a statement not warranted by the facts, for the encomium is not found in their first edition, nor can we accept his statement that on her death-bed Eliza’s thoughts were occupied with *him*. She said, it seems, ‘This muse now looking down upon you is the Muse of History. This divinity floating in the air is Fame, who has brought me you.’ In return he

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registered a solemn vow that he would never write a line 'in which the world should not recognise his friend.'

Eliza died, as her tomb records, on August 8, 1778, aged only 35. 'Genius and benevolence,' says the inscription, 'were united in her,' but, as her admirer admitted, she was sadly deficient in the first; while Daniel Draper and Mrs Sterne, the widow, could most sincerely testify to her benevolence. She left two daughters, whom Walker, an Irish antiquarian, once met at Harrogate and found agreeable.

Such is the story of Yorick and Eliza.*

* [Most of this chapter first appeared in *Cornhill Magazine* for June 1887.]



CLOSING IN



Handwritten text, possibly a signature or a list of names, located on the left side of the page, partially obscured by the black bar.

CHAPTER X

CLOSING IN

THIS agitating episode and his late fit of illness left him very low in spirits and weak in body. He was beginning to find that his methods of life were unsubstantial, and offered but poor solace. He was estranged from his wife, who, it is probably the truth, could not live with him, while the public was beginning to look askance at him.

‘I am unhappy,’ he wrote; ‘thy mother and thyself at a distance from me, and what can compensate for such a destitution? For God’s sake, persuade her to come and fix in England, for life is too short to waste in separation, besides, *I want thee near me, thou child* and darling of my heart.’ He added too, as a motive that might influence Mrs Sterne, that people would naturally say their separation was from choice and not necessity. This piteous appeal from the hopeless Shan-

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dean — writing in his Bond Street lodgings, ill in mind, broken down in body, at last seems to have produced an effect.

Presently he had a relapse. He used to dine with his friends in Gerrard Street on Sundays, and he was foolish enough to venture out on a cold Sunday after taking a 'James' Powder' — one of those fatal James' Powders which brought on Goldsmith's end. The results were, 'bad nights and much feverish agitation,' and the remedies were of the usual Sangrado order — bleeding two days in succession, leaving him 'almost dead.' He wrote to his friends from his bed an affectionate letter, full of gratitude. The physician, he said, told him his illness arose from his catching cold after the James' Powder; 'but he is mistaken,' said Mr Sterne, gracefully and affectionately, 'for I am certain that whatever bears that name must have efficacy with me. This friendly inquiry from Gerrard Street has poured balm into what blood I have left. . . . If I continue mending, it will yet be some time before I have strength enough to get out in a carriage. My first visit will be on a visit of true gratitude. I leave my kind friends to guess where. A

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thousand blessings go along with this, and may Heaven preserve you both. Adieu, my dear sir, and dear lady.'

He presently concluded that country air was the fitting restorative — and that it would be well for him to exchange Bond Street for Coxwold as speedily as he could. By May the first * he was well again, and possibly 'merry and as mischievous as a monkey.' What this being as 'merry and mischievous as a monkey' meant in Mr Sterne's mind, it is not difficult to guess from his letter to the 'Hannah,' before quoted, and which was written about this time.† Nay, in this very letter to Mrs James, he gives an account of a strange Shandean adventure that befel him, and which it is extraordinary that any one should think of writing to a correct and modest lady. He had fixed his departure for the first of May,‡ but could not resist an invitation from Lord and Lady Spencer, who had made up a party to dine and sup — expressly for him. He had not lost his hold upon his fashionable friends. An earl heard

* [Not until the middle of May, was Sterne well enough to think of returning to Coxwold.]

† [The Hannah letters are placed too early by Mr Fitzgerald. They belong to the following October and November.]

‡ [This should be "the twenty-first of May."]

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of his illness at Bath, and wrote up eagerly to inquire after him. To him Mr Sterne imparted a few sound reflections which had suggested themselves while he lay sick and broken in Bond Street; the ‘few treacherous supports’ the mind leans on in the world, ‘*the feigned compassion* of one — the flattery of a second — the civilities of a third — they all deceive.’ In these latter days of his life, light of this sort seems to have been breaking in upon him — strange whispers, which came to him when he lay exhausted with his sunk and beaten chest and bloodless frame, and found a second to think over his gay, wild racket of an existence.

Thus, the next morning — a Friday * — when his chaise was at the door ‘to take and convey this poor body to its legal settlement,’ he wrote a hasty line to an Irish gentleman of fashion — ‘J. Dillon, Esquire,’ one of the March, Selwyn, and Gilly Williams *cóterie*. ‘I am ill — very ill,’ he said; ‘I am sick, both soul and body — it is a cordial to me to hear it is different with you. I am glad you are in a fair road to happiness; enjoy it long, my dear Dillon, whilst I — no matter what —.’

* [May 22.]

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He concludes : ‘ You rogue ! you have locked up my boots, *and I go bootless home, and fear I shall go bootless all my life.*’

He travelled slowly, and was until Monday morning reaching Newark where he arrived much exhausted. ‘ Conveyed thus far,’ as he wrote from the hotel to Stevenson, ‘ like a bale of cadaverous goods consigned to Pluto and Company, lying at the bottom of my chair upon a large pillow, which I had the *prévoyance* to purchase before I set out ;’ and there is something like pathos in his complaint. He goes on : ‘ I am worn out. . . . I know not what is the matter with me ; *but some dérangement presses hard upon this machine* ; still I think it will not be over at this bout. My love to Lee. We shall all meet from the east and from the south, and (as at last) be happy together. My kind respects to a few. — I am, dear Hall, truly yours, &c.’

There is a sad quaintness in these few sentences very simple and natural. But his friend could readily have told him what was the *dérangement* that pressed upon the poor machine. That imprudent dinner and supper at Lord Spencer’s, which he rose from his bed

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to go to, was but one more instance of the old Yorick folly. On the road, near Doncaster, he was so exhausted, that he had to stop at the archbishop's, with whom he remained two days. His Grace, therefore, had not been affected by the remonstrance that had been addressed to him.

When Mr Sterne was again established at Coxwold, having been conveyed thither in his post-chaise 'a bale of cadaverous goods,' his health began to improve. The 'good air, a quiet retreat and quiet reflection along with it, with an ass to milk and another to ride out upon, all do wonders.' And here, in this letter, we trace more of that altered and subdued tone which visited him during these latter months of his life — foreshadowings, as it were, of a final issue — with doubts as to whether his had been exactly the sort of life he could look back on without disquiet. 'I shall live this year, at least, I hope,' he wrote, '*be it but to give the world, before I quit it, as good impressions of me as you have,*' so he wrote to the black Sancho. 'I would only covenant for just so much health and spirits as are sufficient to carry my pen through the task I have set it this summer. But I am a resigned being,

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Sancho, and take health and sickness just as the light and darkness, or the vicissitudes of the seasons, that is, just as it pleases God to send them.' This task which he hoped to be spared to finish, was his *Sentimental Journey*. It seems as though he may have intended to atone for past offences against decency, by his treatment of men and manners in this book ; and it is curiously corroborative of this view, that the first volume does not contain a line offensive to morals, and is, on the contrary, pervaded with a gentle and subdued tone of sympathy, quite in harmony with the key in which he was writing. At this time, too — possibly because some of his cloth were looking coldly on him — he seems to have been inclined to deal with them less indulgently ; for he had made Mr Shandy and the Captain take a ride to 'save a beautiful wood which the Dean and Chapter were hewing down to give to the poor,' and then added a sarcastic note to the effect that Mr Shandy 'must mean the poor in spirit, inasmuch as they divided the money amongst themselves' — a personal allusion to a Dean and Chapter very near him, who had, perhaps, insisted on sacrificing some pretty wood near Coxwold. He

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also introduced his former patron, the Bishop of Gloucester. 'For what has this book done,' he said, alluding to his *Tristram*, 'more than the *Legation of Moses*, or the *Tale of a Tub*, that it may not swim down the gutter of Time along with them?'

He had begun to find an inexpressible relish in his place at Coxwold. He enjoyed his country associates, and felt as 'happy as a prince.' A shower of letters poured in upon him, all calling him to Scarborough, where the 'jolly set,' *i. e.*, 'Lord Granby and Co.,' were expecting him impatiently. Whether from being engaged with his books, or from some more wholesome feeling, he resisted the temptation. He described his new pastoral life to his friend Lee in a very tempting picture, like all his pictures: 'Tis a land of plenty; I sit down alone to venison, fish, and wild fowl, or a couple of fowls or ducks, with curds, and strawberries and cream, and all the simple plenty which a rich valley under Hamilton Hills can produce; with a clean cloth on my table, and a bottle of wine on my right hand to drink your health. I have a hundred hens and chickens about my yard; and not a parishioner catches a hare,

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or a rabbit, or a trout but he brings it as an offering to me.' This last is a little testimony of popularity. His friend had been unsuccessful in some sentimental attachment, and Mr Sterne adds, that he would give him an invitation to Coxwold, 'for absence could lessen no attachment which virtue inspires!' He did not write to inquire about the lady, 'for,' he adds, 'even How d'yes to invalids, or to those who had been lately so, either call to mind what is past, or what may return; at least I find it so.'

He had now got a post-chaise of his own, with 'two long-tailed horses,' in which he took airings every day. He had many pastoral enjoyments, but he owned, sadly, that he had '*what was worst of all, a disquieted heart to reason with.*' To his friend Hall Stevenson, a week or so later, he opened his soul, with the same dispiriting, and almost despairing confession. 'As you are so well,' he said in August, 'rejoice, therefore, and let your heart be merry; mine ought upon the same score, for I have never been so well since I left college, *and should be a marvellous happy man, but for some reflections which bow down my spirits; but if I live but even three or four*

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years, I will acquit myself with honour; and — no matter! We will talk this over when we meet.'

To his kind friends, the Jameses, he wrote very much in the same dejected tone. All his letters to them were of the same genuine affectionate pattern.

‘It is with as much true gratitude as ever heart felt, that I sit down to thank my dear friends, Mr and Mrs James, for the continuation of their attention to me; but for this last instance of their humanity and politeness to me, I must ever be their debtor—I never can thank you enough, my dear friends, and yet I thank you from my soul—— and for the single day’s happiness your goodness would have sent me, I wish I could send you back thousands—— I cannot, but they will come of themselves—— and so God bless you. — I am now got perfectly well, but was a month after my arrival in the country in but a poor state—— *my body has got the start, and is at present more at ease than my mind*—— but this world is a school of trials, and so heaven’s will be done! — I hope you have both enjoyed all that I have wanted—— and

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to complete your joy, that your little lady flourishes like a vine at your table, to which I hope to see her preferred by next winter. I am now beginning to be truly busy with my *Sentimental Journey* — the pains and sorrows of this life having retarded its progress — but I shall make up my lee-way, *and overtake every body in a very short time.*

‘What can I send you that Yorkshire produces? tell me—I want to be of use to you, for I am, my dear friends, with the truest value and esteem,

‘Your ever obliged,

‘L. STERNE.’

Mrs Sterne, as we have seen, had now settled to come to England; she had at last yielded to her husband’s importunities, and announced her intention; but, by some fatality, about half a dozen of Mr Sterne’s letters to her had gone astray, which gave him a good deal of concern, ‘as it wore the aspect of unkindness, which she by no means merits from me.’ This was to his friends the Jameses.

It was now the beginning of August. In June he was ‘in high spirits: care never

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enters his cottage.' But now the spirits had fallen to zero. He sat moping in his vicarage, with no other company than his cat. 'I long to return to you,' he wrote to Crazy Castle; 'but I sit here alone as solitary and sad as a tom-cat, which, by-the-bye, is all the company I keep; he follows me from the parlour to the kitchen, into the garden, and every place. I wish I had a dog. My daughter will bring me one.'

We have a sketch of his dog in a letter to his daughter about this time: and again we must remark the gentle, simple tone he was gradually falling into. 'My pleasures are few in compass. My poor cat sits purring beside me. Your lively French dog shall have his place on the other side of my fire; but if he is as devilish as when I first saw him, I must tutor him, *for I will not have my cat abused*. In short, I will have nothing devilish about me.'

About this time he lost the use of his chaise and 'long-tail'd horses,' from an accident to his postilion. One of Mr Sterne's pistols had gone off in his hand — a mishap which, told by his master, becomes Shandean. 'He instantly fell on his knees,' wrote Mr

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Sterne, 'and said Our Father which art in Heaven, hallowed be Thy name, — at which, like a good Christian, he stopped, not remembering any more of it. The affair was not so bad as he at first thought, for it has only *bursten* two of his fingers (he says).'

By the end of this month, too, he was 'bad again.' The old spitting of blood visited him once more. As he lay weak and exhausted upon his back, some neighbour made his way upstairs to see him. 'That unfeeling brute,' says Mr Sterne in his odd way, 'came and drew my curtains, and with a voice like a trumpet, halloed in my ear, "Z—ds, what a fine kettle of fish you have brought yourself to." In a faint voice I bade him leave me, for comfort sure was never administered in so rough a manner.' This little scene, short as it is, is very graphic, and ludicrous. In fact, all the little sketches that turn up in his letters show plainly that his humour of Tristram came naturally to him, and broke out on other occasions than when he was at his desk writing for the press.'





THE LAST LONDON VISIT



CHAPTER XI

THE LAST LONDON VISIT

AT the beginning of September, he was tempted to go to Scarborough for some sea-bathing. He remained but ten days, and during that time was the guest of an Irish bishop — ‘one of the best of our bishops’ — most likely Dr Jemmatt Browne, Bishop of Cork.* ‘His household consisted of a gentleman and two ladies, which, with the good bishop and myself, made so good a party, that we kept much to ourselves.’

His ‘mitred host’ took a great fancy to him, and tried to tempt him over to Ireland by a living. They left Scarborough together, and being fifteen miles ‘off,’ the bishop and his family went on to London, and Mr Sterne returned home. His friends, the Jameses, heard that he had actually gone

* This is the only Irish bishop’s name we find in the list of subscribers to his *Sentimental Journey*.

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up to London with the episcopal party, and were a little wounded at his not coming to them. 'This, I suppose, was the reason assigned for my being there. *Charity*,' adds Mr Sterne bitterly, thinking of the old calumnies that persecuted Yorick, '*would add a little to the account, and give out that 'twas on the score of one, and perhaps both of the ladies.*'

The Avignon ladies were now at length starting for England. There was a little gaiety and a little business to be got through before they were to leave. The gaieties were a series of *fêtes champêtres*, given by the Marquis de Sade, a relation of his friend the abbé of the same name. The Dowager Lady Carlisle met the abbé later, and thought him 'the liveliest little old man' she had ever met. The business was the drawing on Mr Sterne for forty louis,' a draft he at once took measures to provide for. Mrs Sterne, who had a little estate of her own, was consulting the Paris banker on purchasing a little annuity for her daughter; and Mr Sterne knowing, perhaps, that advice from him might be accepted doubtfully, advised her to insure her life. For, as he

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truly said, if Mrs Sterne died before his daughter, the latter would suffer seriously.

He was still desponding. To a 'Sir William,' another of his roystering friends, who was pressing him to come back to Scarborough, and bantering him freely, he wrote a little banter in return, — 'Enough of such nonsense. The past is over, and I can justify myself unto myself — can you do as much? No, faith! "You can feel." Ay, so can my cat. . . . but caterwauling disgusts me. I had rather raise a gentle flame than have a different one raised on me. *Now, I take Heaven to witness, after all this badinage, my heart is innocent; and the sporting of my pen is equal — just equal to what I did in my boyish days, when I got astride of a stick and galloped away. The truth is this — that my pen governs me, not me my pen.*' And though there is a reckless, half-defiant tone in this declaration, still, taking it with what he has said so lately, and the gaiety of the man to whom it is spoken, we may possibly accept it as a genuine and sincere profession of the spirit that guided him when he wrote his strange, rambling *Shandy* olla podrida.

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To the same gentleman he spoke of the new work then fast advancing, which was to convince him and others ‘that my feelings are from the heart; and then that heart is not of the worst of moulds. Praised be God for my sensibility! Though it has often made me wretched, *yet I would not exchange it for all the pleasures the grossest sensualist ever felt.*’

On the last day of September the travellers got to York; and going in with his chaise Mr Sterne met his wife and darling daughter once more. With the latter he was in raptures; and the fond father, writing to his friends, could not contain his delight at her manners, mind, figure, and everything about her. She had come back ‘an elegant, accomplished little slut.’ ‘Nature, my dear Panchaud’ — the banker had overpowered them with civilities as they passed through Paris — ‘breathes in all her composition, and except a little vivacity, *which is a fault in the world we live in*, I am fully content with her mother’s care of her; for she is as accomplished a slut as France can produce.’ Charming, indeed, are all his letters wherein this favoured child figures; and for the sake

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of this affection — so true, so simple, so natural — much may be forgiven him. A cold, professional sentimentalist, hawking about his tears and sham sorrows could not have found room for so homely a thing as mere paternal affection.

To the Jameses he described her in the same fond terms some six weeks afterwards, when the sense of surprise and novelty might have worn off. ‘She is a dear, good creature, affectionate, and most elegant in body and mind; she is all Heaven could give me in a daughter, but like other blessings, not given but lent; for her mother loves France, and this dear part of me must be torn from my arms to follow the mother, who seems inclined to establish her in France, where she has had many advantageous offers. Do not smile at my weakness, when I say I don’t wonder at it.’

With Coxwould now re-peopled, he pushed on steadily with his new book, and ‘spurred on his Pegasus,’ in order to have it ready for the customary Christmas offering. He found it an agreeable labour, and ‘suited to the frame of mind I have been in for some time past;’ but later on he admitted to a noble friend that

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he had ‘worn out both my spirits and my body with the *Sentimental Journey*,’ and had ‘torn my whole frame into pieces by my feelings.’ There was no doubt but that his nerves were giving way, and he was laying out his favourite remedy — a visit to London, at Christmas, with his new wares — a visit in which his wish to see his friends, the Jameses, again had some share. ‘I long sadly to see you,’ he wrote to them. ‘With what pleasure shall I embrace your little pledge, whom I hope to see every hour increasing in stature and favour both with God and man. I kiss all your hands with a most devout and friendly heart. No man can wish you more good *than your meagre friend does* — few so much, for I am with infinite cordiality, gratitude, and honest affection, etc.’ That he was thinking of them with a sincere regard at a distance, is plain from a postscript to an earl of his acquaintance. ‘If your lordship is in town this Spring, I should be happy if you became acquainted with my friends in Gerrard Street; you would esteem the husband and honour the wife. She is the reverse of most of her sex: they have various pursuits; *she but one, that of pleasing her husband.*’

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By the beginning of December he and Mrs Sterne had their plans finally arranged. She was determined to return to France with her daughter in the Spring, but in the meantime a house 'ready furnished' had been hired in York, where they might spend the winter and have some gaiety. Mr Sterne was to go up to London in January with his book and stay a month or two there. Surely this was considerate on the part of the father, who did not wish in his absence to consign them to the solitude of Coxwold. Nor must it be supposed that these expeditions of his were without direct profit to all their interests. Already another Irish bishop,* the Bishop of Ross, was making him offers, and an advantageous exchange of livings had been proposed to him — to give up Sutton and Stillington, for £350 a year in Surrey, and only thirty miles from London. But he rejected the rich offer and the Surrey preferment. If his wife and daughter would have gone with him he might have been tempted. 'With her sweet, light burden in my arms,' he wrote of his Lydia, 'I could get fast up the hill of pre-

* [Out of Dr Jemmatt Brown, the Bishop of Cork and Ross, Mr Fitzgerald makes two bishops, one for Cork and one for Ross.]

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ferment if I chose it, but without my Lydia, if a mitre were offered me it would sit uneasily upon my brow.' These episcopal dreams were unsubstantial enough. Though it 'hailed mitres' not a single one was to fall on Yorick's head; but it is clear that he was now on the road to some smaller preferment.

When they had completed their arrangements and moved into York, his spirits began to sink again. Every day was bringing him nearer that separation. 'My heart bleeds, Lee,' he wrote with true pathos, 'when I think of parting with my child — 'twill be like the separation of soul and body . . . and equal to nothing but what passes at that tremendous moment: *and like it in one respect — for she will be in one kingdom whilst I am in another.* You will laugh at my weakness,' he goes on, 'but I can't help it — for she is a dear, disinterested girl.' And then he tells with pride of a little trait of character, how he had put ten guineas into her hand for her 'private expenses' at York, and how she had refused this present on the plea that their journey home had already 'straitened him,' and that she would rather put a hun-

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dred guineas in his pocket 'than take ten out of it.'

But now on the eve of his departure he was once more seized with the old shape of illness — 'cast down by a fever and bleeding at the lungs,' which kept him in bed three weeks. But he struggled through — the last time he was to struggle through — and rose 'worn down to a shadow,' and weak as a child. In this state he was comforted by a letter from his friends, the Jameses, and wrote them a letter which reflects the tone of his mind.* 'I had the favour of yours,' he says, 'which, till to-day I have not been able to thank you both kindly for, as I now cordially do, as well as for all your professions and proofs of goodwill to me. I will not and have not balanced accounts with you in this. All I know is that I honour and value you more than I do any good creatures upon earth. . . . And that I would not wish your happiness, and the success of whatever conduces to it, more than I do, was I your brother. . . . I thank you, my dear friend, for what you say so kindly about my daugh-

* I venture to quote more of these letters to the Jameses than of any others, as they are important testimonies to his character.

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.. ter — it shows your good heart ; for as she is a stranger 'tis a free gift in you, but when she is known to you, shall win it fairly, *but, alas ! when this event is to happen is in the clouds.*

‘What a sad scratch of a letter ! but I am weak, my dear friends, both in body and mind — so God bless you. You will see me enter like a ghost, so I tell you beforehand not to be frightened. I am, my dear friends, with the truest attachment and esteem, ever yours, etc.’ *

After Christmas Day,† he started with his friend Hall for town. It was to be his last journey. He was still ill, and had scarcely shaken off his fever ; travelling under such circumstances was hardly prudent. Still, if he had remained, his restless mind would have been chafing at the restraint. He embraced his wife and daughter, and for the last time was to look upon the Lydia he so idolised. No doubt the separation was ‘like

* He was able, too, at this time, to sit for his bust — a vigorous and characteristic head by Nollekens. There are two of these busts now in existence. The original is at Skelton Castle, and was perhaps done at the request of Mr Hall ; the other is in the Yarborough collection. There is, besides, the terra-cotta bust done at Rome.

† [Sterne was in York on December 28, 1767. He must have set out for London a day or two later.]

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the parting of soul and body.' He had done for ever with his 'sweet retirement' of Coxwold, his Cathedral stall.

Mrs Sterne and her daughter remained behind at York, in the house which he had hired for them. They engaged in the York gaieties. Miss Lydia Sterne must have been possessed of unusual attractions, with a certain piquancy reflected from her father — heightened too by a French education and 'that vivacity' which he thought present in too extreme a degree. Making every allowance for Mr Sterne's partial admiration, she must have been attractive. Some time ago there was to be seen a portrait of a young girl and spaniel, 'The French Dog,' done by a French artist — Charpentier — a very graceful portrait, and always accepted as that of Mr Sterne's daughter.

In addition to the vivacity she had brought home, she had also contracted a little French vanity, and perhaps a little French folly. The letters she wrote after her father's death exhibit a curious mixture of flippancy and childishness. She was coming home with all the toilette glories of rouge-pots and cosmetics, which her father, thinking perhaps of that luckless

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Irish belle — the beautiful Coventry — who had killed herself with white lead, sternly insisted should be flung into the *Sorgue* before she set out. ‘I will have no rouge put on in England,’ was his firm decision, and perhaps the harshest thing he ever wrote to her. She was left behind for the gay York winter: certain of the admiration which her natural charms and French manners were sure to attract; certain, at least, of being pointed to with interest and curiosity, as the lively daughter of quaint Tristram. The father of Mr Waterton, the pleasant traveller and skilful naturalist, used to tell his son how he had been introduced to Miss Lydia Sterne at the great York balls in Lord Burlington’s Assembly Rooms, and had often stood up with her for a minuet.

Mr Sterne was again at his old Bond Street* lodgings, and already found his health a little better. ‘I continue to mend,’ he wrote to his friends in Gerrard Street upon the first day† of the New Year, ‘and doubt not but this, with all other evils and uncertainties of

* [Sterne occupied rooms at number 41, over a silk-bag shop.]

† [This is a mistake. The date of this letter cannot be earlier than January 4, 1768.]

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life, will end for the best.' It was a wet morning and he was afraid to go out, so he writes to send all compliments and best wishes to the firesides. He was 'half engaged or more' for the Sunday, but would try hard to get off; if unsuccessful, he would 'glide like a shadow uninvited to Gerrard Street some day this week, that we may eat our bread and meat in love and peace together. God bless you both.' But with all this jealous care of himself he could not resist the old seductions, and before long was mortgaged heavily, weeks in advance, to the old fatal round of parties and entertainments, 'tyed down,' as he put it, 'neck and heels twice over.' Yet it seems to have been more a feeling of inability to resist, than a sense of enjoyment; for he complains with weariness of the invasion of his rooms in Bond Street by streams of company, who came in the morning and did not leave until dinner-time. After these levees a sense of utter prostration used to come upon him.

It is Northcote who picked up a curious and in part improbable story about Sterne's conversation, the date of which may be about this time. Sir Joshua had a dinner-party, at

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which the well-known Mrs Carter, a pious lady of the day, was a guest ; and it is said that during the dinner she attacked Mr Sterne for his free conversation with such wit and severity, that he never recovered this sharp, public reprimand. It is improbable that one who had seen so much of the world could have been so sensitive, but we may be inclined to suspect, if the story be true, that with that subdued feeling and sense of the hopelessness of his recovery which was now weighing on his mind, he may have shown a depression at the reproof, which those who were present might have imputed to the lady's powers of reproach. There was quite enough in the state of his health at that time to account reasonably for his death.*

* I feel some delicacy in touching on the subject of two anecdotes relating to Sterne's speech and manners in society ; but an impartial biographer could not pass them by. Doctor Johnson told Sir John Hawkins that the only occasion he had been in Sterne's society, the latter had exhibited a very indecent print ; and Doctor Dibdin mentions having heard of a copy of the *Sentimental Journey*, illustrated by Sterne himself with very gross pictures. Testimony of this sort, coming from two such distinct quarters, does, indeed, seem of weight. To the last anecdote, however, there is quite a convincing answer. The *Journey* appeared about a week before his last illness — in fact, at a time when he was already physically helpless and in the grasp of death. In the tone and temper he was then, and with the consciousness that his end was not far away, it seems utterly improbable that he could have had time or opportunity for such an outrage. It may be said that it was the MS. of the book, written many months before, that was so adorned ; but this I have seen, and there are no such illus-

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While in Bond Street, he received from America a present of a rather odd sort. A Doctor Eustace had come into possession of a curiously-carved walking-stick which had belonged to 'Governor Dobbs.' This 'piece of Shandean statuary' Mrs Dobbs presented to Doctor Eustace, and he forwarded it to the author of *Tristram*, hoping 'it might prove so ample a field for meditation, as a button-hole or a broom-stick.' Mr Sterne acknowledged the compliment gratefully, and on February the ninth, about six weeks before his death, wrote to the American gentleman what may be accepted as his final profession and last protest against what he considered the misconstruction that had been put upon his books. Reading it so near to his death, it does, indeed, seem almost like Yorick's protest. 'Your walking-stick is in no sense more Shandaick than in that of its having more handles than one; the parallel breaks only in this, that in using the stick every one will take the handle which suits his convenience: in *Tristram Shandy* the handle is taken which suits the

trations. As to what Doctor Johnson saw, we must remember his violent prejudices against 'the man Sterne,' and that the house and host whom Johnson honoured with his company, was not likely to be the house or host to whom such an exhibition would be acceptable.

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passions — their ignorance or their sensibility. There is so little true feeling in the herd of the world, that I wish I could have got an Act of Parliament when the books first appeared that none but wise men should look unto them.' He then adds — that all the people of genius in the country, 'a few hypocrites and Tartuffes excepted,' had come round to his side, and he says that it has had a wonderful reception in France, Germany, and Italy. Thus we see to the very end he strangely believed that he was a sort of victim to the prejudices of a faction, and to the last, with a perversion not in the least unnatural, supposed what he had written to be harmless.

At this time the entertainments of the notorious Mrs Cornely, at the Soho Rooms, were the fashionable *fureurs* of the moment. This was owing not so much to the amusement itself, as to an artful rigour in the issuing of tickets. During the first days of this new year, one of these select festivals was to be celebrated.*

* There was an advertisement in the papers to this effect: — 'Mrs Cornely begs leave to acquaint the Nobility and Gentry, Subscribers to the Society in Soho Square, that the Second Meeting will be on Thursday next. The Tickets are this year transferable either to ladies or gentlemen — the same as they were the winter before last.'

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Mr and Mrs James were wishing to get a ticket for this important festival, and though they knew Lord Upper Ossory, and other persons of fashion, they turned to Mr Sterne to help them in their necessity. Most likely they wanted it not for themselves, but for 'Miss Ascough, the wise;' 'Miss Pigot, the witty;' or some other young lady of their circle. Mr Sterne was not a subscriber this year, which, like a straw as it is upon the surface, shows that he had in some degree foresworn frivolity. But he sent about diligently to one after another of his 'Soho friends.' If he failed he hoped they would do him the justice to believe him 'truly miserable.'

The next day, ill as he was, he hurried over the town, posted to the Secretary of State, to Sir George Macartney — now to be a new peer — to Mr Lascelles, to Mr Fitz-Maurice, begging, importuning, for one of these coveted tickets — but he said truly, he 'could as soon get a place at Court.'

Mrs James had just been sitting to West, the painter, who, in Mr Sterne's opinion, had made an admirable likeness. It was not finished, and on Sunday, the 7th of March, Mr Sterne was to 'tread the old pleasing road from Bond to

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Gerrard Street,' and be there before four, so as to have 'a little time and a little daylight to see Mrs James's picture.' To West, Lydia Sterne was to sit a little later. Mrs James herself was something of an artist, and Mr Sterne sent her as a present a box of water-colours, and gave a few lessons. He borrowed some sketches touched with chalk, from a gentleman who had travelled in Italy, as subjects for her to copy. This gentleman had sent him a set of prints, which Mr Sterne promised himself to hang up in his study — 'if,' he added, with but too faithful a foreboding, 'I recover from my state of health, *and live to revisit Coxwold this summer.*'

Mr Sterne's friend also was to dine in Gerrard Street on the following Sunday, and it was settled that they should go together at the same time, a little earlier than usual, so as to have light to see West's picture. But even on that Sunday, he could not be free or at rest: for Mr Beauclerk — Boswell's Beauclerk — had engaged him to breakfast, and a nobleman had secured the reversion of his company for an hour at least, after the breakfast. So to the end, the old racket was in his ears, the old

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din and hurly-burly of society was echoing about him.

This Sunday dinner at Gerrard Street was to be Yorick's last festival. It is something to think that when he made his bow to society he passed from the quiet, pure atmosphere of that good and virtuous family.

The new book was now all but ready, and in a note dated 'Thursday, which he wrote to his 'dear friends' jointly, excusing himself for a mistake of Saturday for Sunday, the old dining day: — 'I am astonished I could make any mistake in a card wrote by Mrs James, in which my friend is as unrivalled as in a hundred greater excellencies.' He promises that his book will be out on the 'Thursday following, but possibly on the Wednesday afternoon. They did not appear until the latter of these days, which was the 27th of February. The price was the usual one of five shillings for the two pretty volumes, and subscribers were respectfully requested to send for their copies to Messrs Becket and P. de Hondt, in the Strand. The work itself was announced as 'Vol. 1 and 2, of a *Sentimental Journey through France and*

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Italy,' showing that this, too, was an idea which he would have expanded, like *Tristram*, through many volumes. He at first had laid out a change in the shape of publication, and thought ambitiously of a stately quarto, with handsome margin, the price to be half-a-guinea. But wisely he returned to the favourite *Shandy* size—the compact little pocket volumes, which were now so familiar to the public. How much has the world lost—how many charming pictures of Italian life and character—by the sudden relaxing of those thin fingers and the busy pen they held!

This was now at hand. About the second week of the next month, being still 'tied down neck and heels with engagements,' he was seized with a chest attack, which he took for influenza, but which clung to him with more than usual obstinacy. He struggled with it, and seemed to think he would as usual come off victorious. Just at that time a letter came to him from his daughter, which must have had a chilling, dispiriting effect, notwithstanding that it set out with news of *The Journey* being read and admired in York by every one.

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He seems to have been much agitated by what the mother had told her daughter, that it was his intention to bequeath the care of his Lydia to the Indian lady, whom the world knew as Eliza. ‘The subject of thy letter,’ wrote Mr Sterne with some agitation, ‘has astonished me. She could know but little of my feelings to tell thee that I should bequeath thee as a legacy to Mrs (Draper).’ He then reassures her, and tells her how Mrs James will watch over her — ‘the friend whom I have so often talked and wrote about; from her you will learn to be an affectionate wife, a tender mother, and a sincere friend.’ He then alludes to the success of his book; ‘but what is the gratification of my feelings on this occasion — the want of health bows me down — this vile influenza — *be not alarmed, I think I shall get the better of it*, and shall be with you both the first of May; and if I escape, ’twill not be for a long period, my child, unless a quiet retreat and peace of mind can restore me.’

Nothing can be more tenderly delicate than that hurried correction of himself, ‘*be not alarmed, I think I shall get the better*

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of it;' and the gentle way — almost artful — in which he goes on to prepare his daughter's mind for the worst. 'If I escape, 'twill not be for a long period, my child. But I think, my Lydia, thy mother will survive me — do not deject her spirits with thy affections on my account.' He sends them both a present of a necklace and buckles. 'I am never alone,' he goes on, 'the kindness of my friends is ever the same. *I wish, though, I had thee to nurse me; but I am deny'd that.* Write to me twice a week at least. God bless thee, my child; and believe me *ever, ever* thy affectionate father,

‘L. S.’

‘If I ever revisit Coxwould!’ He was hurrying fast from that ‘sweet retirement.’ What he took for a ‘vile influenza,’ became a pleurisy; and on the Thursday following (March 10th) he was bled three times, and on the next day blistered. He was prostrate and exhausted for several days after this violent treatment; but as he lay there, the thought of the child he loved so dearly came upon him, and with a feeble hand he was just able to write a few tottering characters

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to his friend, Mrs James. So piteous and touching an appeal has rarely come from a death-bed: it was the poor, broken, gasping, dying Yorick's last letter. In it we seem to hear a humble acknowledgment of errors, and a cry for pardon for 'follies which my heart, not my head, betrayed me into!' — a declaration we may accept as genuine, and which is the true key to all his Shandean sins, errors, mistakes, and follies.

'15th March, TUESDAY.

'Your poor friend is scarce able to write — he has been at death's door this week with a pleurisy — I was bled three times on Thursday, and blister'd on Friday — The physician says I am better — God knows, for I feel myself sadly wrong, and shall, if I recover, be a long while of gaining strength. — Before I have gone thro' half this letter, I must stop to rest my weak hand above a dozen times — Mr James was so good to call upon me yesterday. I felt emotions not to be described at the sight of him, and he overjoy'd me by talking a great deal of you. — Do, dear Mrs James, entreat him to come to-morrow, or next day, for perhaps I have

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not many days, or hours, to live — I want to ask a favour of him, if I find myself worse — that I shall beg of you, if in this wrestling I come off conqueror — my spirits are fled — 'tis a bad omen — do not weep, my dear Lady — your tears are too precious to shed for me — bottle them up, and may the cork never be drawn. — Dearest, kindest, gentlest, and best of women! may health, peace, and happiness prove your handmaids. — If I die, cherish the remembrance of me, and forget the follies which you so often condemn'd — which my heart, not my head, betray'd me into. Should my child, my Lydia, want a mother, may I hope you will (if she is left parentless) take her to your bosom? — You are the only woman on earth I can depend upon for such a benevolent action. — I wrote to her a fortnight ago, and told her what, I trust, she will find in you — Mr James will be a father to her — he will protect her from every insult, for he wears a sword which he has served his country with, and which he would know how to draw out of the scabbard in defence of innocence. — Commend me to him — as I now commend you to that Being who takes under

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his care the good and kind part of the world.
— Adieu ! all grateful thanks to you and
Mr James.

‘ Your poor affectionate friend,
‘ L. STERNE.’

This was Tuesday. Friday was the last day of his life. He seems to have been left there, at Bond Street, — alone, deserted, and entirely dependent (scarcely in the sense he had wished) on the hired offices of a lodging-house servant.*

But little is known of his last moments. Towards four o'clock in the afternoon he complained of cold in his feet, and asked the attendant to chafe them. This suggests the end of Falstaff. It seemed to relieve him ; but presently he said the cold was mounting yet higher ; and while she was striving to kindle a warmth in his feet and ankles, which a more awful power was driving away, someone knocked at the hall-door, and the landlady opening it, found it was a footman sent to inquire after Mr Sterne's

* M. Janin, with an eye to a bit of ghastly sentimentality wholly indefensible, transforms this person into ‘ Mad. — de —, sa belle et aimable garde-malade,’ and makes the dying Yorick place her hand upon his heart.

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health. In Clifford Street close by, 'Fish' Crawford was having a grand dinner-party, served by his 'French cook,' and most of the guests at table were friends of the dying humorist. Of the company were the Dukes of Grafton and Roxburghe, the Earls of March and Ossory; Mr Garrick, Mr Hume, and Mr James. Someone having mentioned his illness — Mr James most probably — it was proposed to send to know how he was, and the footman, whose name has been preserved, was despatched to New Bond Street to inquire.

The landlady was not able, or did not care, to give him the latest news, but bade him go up and inquire of the attendant. He did so, and entered the room just as the deserted Shandean was expiring. He stood by and waited to see the end; he noted how the wasted arm was suddenly raised, as if to ward off something, caught a murmur of 'Now it is come!' and then saw his frame relax in death.*

Such was Yorick's end — a footman and a sick-nurse watching his agonies! The foot-

* Such is the account given by James Macdonald, the Scotch footman, in his *Memoirs*.

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man went his way back to the merry party of gentlemen in Clifford Street, and told what he had seen. The gentlemen, he says, were all very sorry, and lamented him very much. We can almost hear the after-dinner panegyric: Hume and Garrick could have told of his freaks in Paris, and bewailed with convivial grief how Yorick had been no one's enemy but his own. Mr James could have said something about his good heart. Then, as of course, the claret went round, and Lord March went back again to the praises of 'the Rena,' or the 'Zamperini.'

So Yorick passed away, lonely, abandoned. Not in this sense, truly, did he mean that poor bald scrap of philosophy which he had set down in his *Tristram*, to be interpreted — when he wished to die in an inn, and to have the cold, hired offices of strangers to soothe his last moments. This was a poor bit of Shandyism, set down to startle the crowd. Perhaps it came back on him, when he saw the footman standing in the doorway, and felt a hand stripping him of his ornaments. For it was said, that while one hired hand was chafing the poor Shandean's icy limbs, the other was busy plundering him of his gold

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sleeve buttons.* But, as will be seen, a still more horrid mystery — like the *feu follet* of a graveyard — was destined to overshadow what remained of Yorick.

‘Died yesterday,’ said the journals of Saturday, ‘at his lodgings, in Bond Street, the Rev. Mr Sterne, author of *Tristram Shandy*, some volumes of *Sermons*, and the *Sentimental Journey*.’ Others added, ‘Alas ! Poor Yorick !’ Poor Yorick indeed ! when the very bookseller’s hack, who made profit out of the new edition of his works, could prefix to it so cruel and so illogical a statement as the following : ‘Mr Sterne died as he lived, the same indifferent, careless creature ; *as*, a day or two before his death, he seemed not in the least affected by his approaching dissolution.’

In the Bayswater Road, not very far from Tyburn Gate, a new burying-ground had been opened — attached to that church in Hanover Square, where the more fashionable marriage-rites are celebrated. We can readily find our way to it now, for it is notorious among the neglected graveyards of London : and is useful as a sort of huge pit for the rubbish of

* This was told to Doctor Ferrier.

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the ruinous houses that hem it in closely all round. Weeds rioting in their impurity, yawning graves, headstones staggering over, dirt, neglect, and a squalid-looking dead-house, all soiled and grimed, with a belfry and a bell — this is now, or was until lately, the condition of the graveyard where Sterne is supposed to lie. It was then ‘the new burying-ground, near Tyburn;’ and to this spot, on the day of his interment, at twelve o’clock noon, came a single mourning coach, with ‘two gentlemen inside.’ One of them is known to have been Becket, his publisher; the other we fairly assume to have been his friend Mr James. Elia’s Sam Salt told Smith that he also was of the party. The bell, over the soiled and grimed dead-house, was not allowed to ring. And in this ‘private’ manner (a privacy almost amounting to shame), was the body of the great humorist consigned to earth. The ‘two gentlemen’ represented the splendid roll of nobility and gentry that ‘pranced’ before his sermons! One more instance of that fatal blight of desertion that seems to attend on the jesters of society at their grave.

Now follows that strange and ghastly scene,

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at which the meagre figure of poor Yorick, upon which he and others were so often merry, was to make a last appearance.

When the 'two gentlemen' were seeing the earth laid upon their friend's remains, there were other and more profane eyes watching from the road, and marking the spot. At that time the tribe of resurrection men pursued their calling as lawlessly as highwaymen did theirs upon the road. And this 'new Tyburn burying-ground' had already acquired a notoriety, as being the scene of constant outrages of this kind. Only a few months before, it had become necessary to place regular watchers there, and a large mastiff dog: in spite of which precautions, the infamous spoliation continued.*

Two nights after, on the 24th, the men came, dug up the body, placed it in a case, and sent it away down to Cambridge.

'Mr Collignon, B.M.,' of Trinity, was then Professor of Anatomy, and it had been disposed of to him. These aids to medical science being costly, and procured with difficulty, Mr Collignon invited some friends to see him illustrate anatomy on the body

* See *St. James's Chronicle*, Nov. 1767.

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that had been sent down to him from London; and an old friend of Mr Sterne, who was of the party, was inexpressibly shocked at recognising the familiar features, and fainted away on the spot. It was too late, unfortunately, to save the body from the knife, for the dissection had nearly been completed.

What a close to Yorick's strange career, which began in wanderings, and brought him back thus finally to his old University! There is even a grim, lurid Shandeism over the scene, a charnel-house humour in that recognition of the strange lean Yorick features—more lean in death—upon the dissecting table.

But the evidence on which the story is founded seems too convincing not to be accepted. There had been many indistinct shapes of the statement—some improbable—but all pointing the same way. Mr Allan Cunningham had heard that the body had been sold by the landlady in discharge of her rent; a few months later it was stated that 'the body of the late Mr Sterne' had been 'anatomised.' The story was accepted at the time as true, and was

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in the newspapers. The late Mr Malone said that he had actually spoken with the gentleman who was present at the dissection and who had recognised the features; and an unknown note-maker has written on his fly-leaf of an old copy of the *Sentimental Journey*—the first edition—that ‘the Rev. Mr Green told me that, being at Cambridge a short time after, he saw the skeleton, and had the story confirmed to him by the Professor.’* At the time it was notorious that the graveyard was nightly plundered by the ‘resurrection men,’ while the mean funeral indicated that it was a person of humble rank. This seems to confirm the hideous tale. For this reason it was natural that no monument has been erected to mark the spot where he had been interred. A poetical epitaph by Garrick, of indifferent merit, went round and was admired; but it was felt, perhaps, that the circumstances were too painful, and that a memorial would only revive the recollection. Long after, two persons — freemasons — noted the absence of a monument, and set up a headstone, with an inscription begin-

* Willis's *Current Notes*.

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ning—‘*Near* this place is interred,’ etc., which is yet a further confirmation of the story; as it shows that the spot could not be pointed out. The headstone, with its inscription, is indeed a memorial, not of Sterne, but of these masons’ vanity and bad taste.*

It is strange to think that there were people who might have taken the skull of a second Yorick into their hand, as the Prince of Denmark did that of the first, and have

* ‘Near to this Place
Lies the Body of
The Reverend Laurence Sterne, A.M.,
Died September 13th, 1768,
Aged 53 years.

“*Ah! molliter ossa quiescant.*”

‘If a sound Head, warm Heart, and Breast humane,
Unsullied Worth, and Soul without a stain;
If mental Powers could ever justly claim
The well-won Tribute of immortal Fame,
Sterne was the *Man*, who, with gigantic Stride,
Mowed down luxuriant Follies far and wide.
Yet what, though keenest Knowledge of Mankind
Unseal’d to him the Springs that move the Mind;
What did it cost him? ridicul’d, abus’d,
By Fools insulted, and by Prudes accus’d,
In his, mild reader, view thy future Fate,
Like him despise, what ’twere a sin to hate.

‘This monumental stone was erected by two brother masons; for although he did not live to be a member of their society, yet as his all incomparable performances evidently prove him to have acted by rule and square, they rejoice in this opportunity of perpetuating his high and irreproachable character to after ages.

‘W. & S.’

Both Sir Walter Scott and the ‘Brother Masons’ were mistaken as to the month of his death. It is to the honour of a clergyman of the parish—a Mr Potter—that a few years back he made a shilling subscription to have this headstone cleaned and repaired.

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moralised over it sadly. They might have thought of his life, weighed his character, not too partially, but with allowance — as I — and have summed up all, something after this fashion: He was more or less weak, vain, careless, idle, and given to pleasure. He was free of pen and speech — profane sometimes — and did no honour to the gown he wore — these were the general scandals of his time, which seized on him like a contagion. He had the one redeeming gift of a kind, fatherly affection, a careful consideration (wonderful in a careless being) for the pecuniary interests of those for whom it was his duty to provide, a genial humour, and, strange as it may seem, a sort of natural piety. He was unfortunate in his marriage — unfortunate in his friends — unfortunate in the age, which seemed to strive how it should turn his head with flatteries; and unfortunate in a frame that was always ailing. His were, in short, as he said over and over again so pathetically, follies of the head and not of the heart. These things should be kept in view; and, when we would anticipate the task of the Recording Angel, should prompt us — not to blot out the entry for ever, but be indulgent as we can.

**MR STERNE'S WIDOW AND
DAUGHTER**



CHAPTER XII

MR STERNE'S WIDOW AND DAUGHTER

IT turned out that the widow and daughter were left in straitened circumstances.

Yorick was to be no exception to the long roll of pleasant men who set tables in a roar, but who die and leave not a shilling. His debts were £1100 — upon which must be reckoned that burnt-down vicarage of Sutton, whose rebuilding had been put off until too late. There was no will — which was to be expected. The widow took out administration — just as Roger Sterne's widow had — on June the fourth: and Doctor Topham, the hero of the 'Good Warm Watch Coat,' was the official who received the fees from her.

As a first step, everything at Coxwould was sold. The books — the same I suppose which he got 'dirt-cheap' many years before — were sent to Messrs Todd & Sotheran, of

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York, booksellers, who had succeeded Hill-yard in Stonegate, and the auction catalogue of those gentlemen, containing ‘the valuable library of the late Rev. Mr Sterne, author of *Tristram Shandy*,’ turned up at a public sale not long since. But, taken together, his ‘effects’ did not produce more than £400. Creditors began to press. Mrs Sterne had a little estate of forty pounds a year settled on herself; and out of this pittance they undertook to honour Mr Sterne’s memory and discharge the balance of seven hundred. A well-meant, but unmeaning tribute, as any business friend could have told them. The Rev. Mr Cheap began to press them about the burnt-down parsonage, and instituted a suit for dilapidations — which they had to compromise. This was brought on them by the carelessness of Mr Sterne’s curate, and should, in fairness, be deducted from his own proper liabilities; which leaves his personal debts at a not very extravagant figure.

But the Yorkshire people, hearing of their distress, and perhaps as a tribute to the late Mr Yorick, came generously to their assistance; and at the great York races in the August of the same year, a handsome col-

STERNE'S WIDOW AND DAUGHTER

lection was made, amounting to eight hundred pounds. Even in the shape of this last tribute to his memory, there was something Shandean. The appeal is made upon a race-ground, and to the crowd that spreads over a race-ground!

This aid set them a little at their ease, and at last enabled them to go up to London, where they had lodgings in Gerrard Street, Soho, at Mr Williams', paper merchant. They had brought a bundle of Mr Sterne's old sermons, most likely those 'sweepings of his study' he had put aside as least worthy of publication. Becket* had given them 'a trifle' for the copyright, but they hoped by getting subscriptions, which would come to them exclusively, to make up a handsome sum.

Mr Wilkes was now in London, and Miss

* [The posthumous sermons were published by Strahan. The following autograph letter of Lydia Sterne to Strahan may refer to the sermons, or, as it is undated, to the correspondence of Sterne that finally appeared in 1775.

"I enclose you Mr Beckett's proposal — when he last offer'd 400*l.* for the copyright he insisted on no such terms as these — this affair of not offering them to anyone else must be managed with the greatest caution — for you see he says that he will not take them if offer'd elsewhere. He will be judge of the quantity and quality — & insists on a year's credit. All these points my mother and myself most earnestly desire you to consider — unless you could be pretty sure of getting us more than 400*l.* the offering them might perhaps come to Beckett's knowledge — yet believe me Sr we had rather anyone had them than Becket — he is a *dirty fellow*."] "

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Lydia wrote to him from Gerrard Street a quiet, humble letter, asking his patronage and influence with distinguished friends. It began:—‘Mrs and Miss Sterne’s compliments wait on Mr Wilkes. They intend doing themselves the honour of calling upon him if not disagreeable. . . . They would not intrude, but they should be happy to see a person whom they honour, and whom Mr Sterne greatly admired. Not to have a melancholy story to tell when they meet, Miss Sterne begs leave to tell it now in a few words.’ A very simple and artless letter, and this last stroke was unconsciously very happily suited to a man of Wilkes’s rough and busy character, who would not like to look forward to a dismal interview.

He saw them, promised them his aid, and took up the project with enthusiasm. He undertook to write the life of his departed friend. They were to give him all letters and materials. So had he undertaken the life of his dear friend Churchill. Hall Stevenson was also written to, and agreed to join in the undertaking. A work of this kind, as Miss Sterne wrote later, by ‘two men of such genius,’ was certain to sell. All this

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being arranged, and having promised Mr Wilkes, who seems to have been interested in Miss Sterne, to write to him, they left London for France, the country they both liked.

Wilkes had received them cordially, and with that 'effusion' and lavish fund of promises which was his characteristic. He would do everything. That a daughter should have been anxious that her father's career should have been set forth by the pens of two such professed debauchees and writers of scandalous works shows a want of discretion amounting to folly. The promise, however, was to be as vain as the performance would have been eccentric. Wilkes went into details, and suggested that the daughter should ornament the work with drawings. It was also intended to add his Letters; and though she felt that these were not of a description that ought to be given to the public, as they would do no credit to his memory, Miss Lydia flippantly announced that if the publisher seemed cool as to the whole project, he was to be tempted by the offer of the Correspondence.

The ladies set off for France and fixed

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themselves at Angoulême. Lydia wrote to her new patron from that city in a strain that contrasts curiously with her previous obsequiousness. Her whole character as 'an accomplished little slut' seems to be revealed in this communication, and there is a pertness and affectation of smartness which does not predispose us in her favour. But not a word from Mr Wilkes. She wrote from M. Bologne's in the Rue Cordeliers, on July 22, 1769. Nothing can be more subdued and humble than the curiously jumbled topics:

‘DEAR SIR, — ’Tis with the greatest pleasure I take my pen to fulfil the promise I made you the last time I had the pleasure of seeing you. I mean that of writing to you, and to give you an account of us and of our situation. A correspondent like Mr Wilkes gives your humble servant more vanity than I thought I was capable of. I am an inch taller to-day than I was yesterday. I wish the French may not find a difference in my behaviour—*ce sera bien pire*. When I receive a letter from you, they certainly will say, “*Peste ! que cette fille est aujourd’hui dans ces grands airs !*”

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Décampons au plus vite." This is supposing you will favour me with an answer, else I have done wrong to style you "correspondent:" but I know you are polite, and never want what the French call *égards pour les femmes: encore moins, je m'imagine, vis-à-vis les filles.*

'You expected an English letter, and not a *pot pourri*. I will not write one word more of French. I know not why I do, for I am no very great admirer of the language: 'tis better calculated for nonsense than my own; and consequently suits me better to write, though not Mr Wilkes to read. Thank my stars, you promised me not to show my letters to anyone, not even to your confessor — remember that.

'Now, as to our journey, — nothing either agreeable in it or diverting, I promise you. A journey through France (that is to say, the posting part of it) cannot be a *Sentimental* one; for it is one continued squabble with innkeepers and postilions! yet not like Smelfungus, who never kept his temper; for we kept ours, and laughed whilst we scolded. — How much the French have the advantage over us! They give themselves

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ease by swearing ; which, you know, is talking bawdy. We English women do not know how to set about it ; yet, as archbishops in France swear as well as their neighbours (for I have heard them, to my edification), I cannot see why we women may not follow their example. The French women, however, do it *sans façon*. Again ! — scratch out the words *sans façon* yourself, and put an English one in the place, which I will hereafter adopt.

‘ Angoulême is a pretty town : the country most delightful, and from the principal walk there is a very fine prospect ; a serpentine river, which joins the Garonne at Bourdeaux, has a very good effect ; trees in the middle of it, which form little islands, where the inhabitants go and take the *fresco* : — in short, ’tis a most pleasant prospect ; and I know no greater pleasure than sitting by the side of the river, reading Milton or Shakespeare to my mother. Sometimes I take my guitar and sing to her. Thus do the hours slide away imperceptibly ; with reading, writing, drawing, and music.

“ Thus wisely careless, innocently gay,
We play the trifle life away.”

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Yet, dear Sir, often do we wish ourselves in England. Necessity sent us hither ; may Fortune bring us back !

‘ We receive much civility from the people here. We had letters of recommendation, which I would advise every English person to procure wherever he goes in France. We have visitors, even more than we wish — as we ever found the French in general very insipid. I would rather choose to converse with people much superior to me in understanding (that I grant I can easily do, so you need not smile). With the one I can have no improvement, but with people of sense I am sure of learning something every hour ; as being intimate with a person of an excellent heart and sensible feelings mends sometimes one's own.

‘ 'Tis now time to remind Mr Wilkes of his kind promise — to exhort him to fulfil it. If you knew, dear Sir, how much we are straitened as to our income, you would not neglect it. We should be truly happy to be so much obliged to you that we may join, to our admiration of Mr Wilkes in his public character, tears of gratitude whenever we hear his name mentioned, for the peculiar

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service he has rendered us. Much shall we owe to Mr Hall for that and many other favours; but to you do we owe the kind intention which we beg you to put in practice. As I know Mr Hall is somewhat lazy, as you were the promoter, write to him yourself: he will be more attentive to what you say. . . .

‘I fear I have wore out your patience. Forgive me, ’twas a pleasing occupation to write to you. I know not whether it is impertinent to ask you if your affairs go on equal to the wishes of your friends? That they may, believe me, is the sincere wish of,

‘ Dear Sir,

‘ Your most faithful, obliged friend,

‘ L. STERNE

‘ *P. S.* — We flatter ourselves you are well. My mother joins in most cordial wishes for your welfare and happiness. May everything you wish be granted you! as I am sure you will grant us ours; nay, you even *prevented it*.

‘ Once more, adieu!

‘ Our best compliments wait on Miss Wilkes.’

Mr Wilkes had, however, sufficient on his hands. He was harassed with difficulties and

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shut up in the King's Bench Prison. But then he had, at least, leisure and opportunity to have replied. Some three months went by. No reply came, and Lydia again appealed to him:—

‘How long have I waited’ (she wrote in October) ‘for a letter from Mr Wilkes in answer to that I wrote him. I fear he is not well; I fear his own affairs have not allowed him time to answer me; in short, I am full of fears. “Hope deferred makes the heart sick.” Three lines, with a promise of writing Tristram’s life, for the benefit of his widow and daughter, would make us happy. A promise, did I say? that I already have: but a second *assurance*. Indeed, my dear Sir, since I last wrote we stand more in need of such an act of kindness. Panchaud’s failure has hurt us considerably: we have, I fear, lost more than, in our circumstances, we could afford to lose. Do not, I beseech you, disappoint us: let me have a single line from you, “I will perform my promise,” and joy will take place of our sorrow. I trust you will write to Hall; in pity, do.

‘Adieu, dear Sir! May you enjoy all the

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happiness you deserve! may every wish of yours be granted, as I am sure you will grant my request! My mother joins in best compliments. Our most cordial wishes attend you and the amiable Miss Wilkes. — Believe me, most truly, your faithful friend, and obedient, humble servant, L. STERNE.'

Again no answer was returned to this appeal. At the same time she addressed a reminder to the proposed coadjutor, Mr Hall Stevenson, who also took no notice. Six months went by, and, despairing of hearing from Wilkes, she wrote again to Stevenson:—

'If you ever felt' (she says) 'what hope deferred occasions, you would not have put us under that painful situation; from whom the neglect arises I know not, but surely a line from you, dear Sir, would not have cost you much trouble. Tax me not with boldness for using the word *neglect*: as you both promised, out of the benevolence of your hearts, to write my father's Life for the benefit of his widow and daughter, and as I myself look on a promise as sacred, and I doubt not but you think as I do; in that case the word is not improper. In

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short, dear Sir, I ask but this of you; to tell me by a very short letter, whether we may depend on yours and Mr Wilkes's promise, or if we must renounce the pleasing expectation. But, dear Sir, consider that the fulfilling of it may put 400*l.* into our pockets; and that the declining it would be unkind, after having made us hope and depend upon that kindness. Let this plead my excuse.

‘If you do not choose to take the trouble to wait on Mr Wilkes, send him my letter, and let me know the *oui ou le non*. Still let me urge, press, and entreat Mr Hall to be as good as his word: if he will interest himself in our behalf, ’twill but be acting consistent with his character; ’twill prove that Eugenius was the friend of Yorick — nothing can prove it stronger than befriending his widow and daughter. — Adieu, dear Sir! — Believe me your most obliged, humble servant,

L. STERNE.

‘My mother joins in best compliments.’

As was to be expected, neither of the gentlemen performed what they had undertaken to do. Indeed it may be doubted if

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they had the gifts for such a task. So a rather pretty edition of the works appeared, and without a life.

Thus left to their own resources, the daughter proceeded to arrange her father's letters, and published them in due course. Nothing could be more indiscreet than the editing, though there is an apparent attempt at suppressing names, etc. Two or three of the letters, as we have seen, are fatally damaging to Sterne's reputation, and drove, as it were, the last nail into its coffin. But they are curious from another point of view.

It has been mentioned that Sterne kept a letter-book, but it will be interesting here to show how the artful humorist studied and prepared and re-cast his letters before sending them forth:—

‘*P. S.* — I have just received as a present from a right Honble. a most elegant gold snuff-box — fabricated for me at Paris — I wish Eliza was here — I would lay it at her feet — however, I will enrich my gold Box with her picture — and if the Donor does not approve of such an acquisition to his pledge of friendship — I will send him his Box again.

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‘ May I presume to enclose you the letter I write to Mrs Draper? I know you will write yourself, and my letter may have the honour to chaperon yours to India. Mrs Sterne and my daughter are coming to stay a couple of months with, as far as from Avignon — and then return — Here’s Complaisance for you — I went 500 miles the last spring out of my way to pay my wife a week’s visit — and she is at the expense of coming post a thousand miles to return it! What a happy pair! however, en passant she takes back sixteen hundred pds. into France with her, and will do me the honour likewise to strip me of everything I have — except Eliza’s Picture — adieu.

‘ To Mrs James, in Gerard Street,
‘ Free Fauconberg. Soho, London.’

The published version is as follows:

‘ *P.S.* — I have just received, as a present from a man I shall ever love, a most elegant gold snuff-box, fabricated for me at Paris — ’tis not the first pledge I have received of his friendship. May I presume to enclose you a letter of chit-chat which I shall write to Eliza? I know you will write yourself, and my letter

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may have the honour to *chaperon* yours to India — they will neither of them be the worse received for going together in company, but I fear they will get late in the year to their destined port, as they go first to Bengal.’

The postscript of the published letter is certainly tame and colourless as compared with Mr Gibbs’s version. It was quite excusable in the ‘sprightly’ Lydia, as editor of her father’s correspondence, to omit the sarcastic allusion to his wife and daughter’s impending visit, or to cut out the dedication of its golden shrine to Eliza’s miniature. Yet why the ‘Rt. Honble.,’ probably Sir G. Macartney, should be sentimentalised into ‘a man I shall ever love,’ one cannot quite discover.

And again: An undated draft letter from Sterne in Bond Street to Mr and Mrs James. This rough copy letter seems to have been expanded into the published letter to Mr and Mrs James, written from Old Bond Street, and dated April 21st, 176 (No. 93). This last is too long to quote at length, but we may compare its more material portion :

‘ I fell ill the moment I got to my lodgings — he (the physician) says it is owing to my

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taking James's Powder, and venturing out on so cold a day as Sunday — but he is mistaken, for I am certain whatever bears the name must have efficacy with me.'

Now for Mr Gibbs's draft, which runs in the third person : —

'Mr Sterne's kindest and most friendly compliments to Mrs James, with his most sentimental thanks for her obliging enquiry after his health — he fell ill the moment he got to his lodgings, and has been attended by a physician ever since. He says 'tis owing to Mr Sterne's taking James's Powder, and venturing out on so cold a day — but Mr Sterne could give a truer account. He is almost dead, yet still hopes to glide like a shadow to Gerard Street in a few days, to thank his good friend for her good will. All compliments to Mr James, and all comfort to his good lady.'

Observe here that the punning compliment on the name James did not strike Sterne till he was making his second copy of the note.

These and other such details were communicated by Mr Gibbs to the editor of the *Athenæum*.

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Sterne, as we have seen, took the trouble of keeping an elaborate journal to amuse his Eliza. When writing this account of Sterne, I was struck by Mr Thackeray's allusion—in one of his 'Roundabout Papers' to 'the gentleman of Bath,' who offered to show him Sterne's private journal kept for Eliza. Strange to say, the novelist thought this curious record of slight importance, and made no use of it. A literary friend of his and my own was kind enough to ask him about this matter, to whom he wrote this explanation:—

‘PALACE GARDENS, KENSINGTON, W.
‘*Mar.* 9, 1863.

‘I forget the name of the Bath gentleman who lent me Sterne's lying MS. journal to Mrs Draper. He writes to Eliza that he was dreadfully ill, had so much blood taken from him, but nevertheless was ever and ever his Eliza's. In the printed letters—this is one—(a plague on the people. I have been looking a $\frac{1}{4}$ hour in vain for my Sterne)—addressed from the Mount Coffee House to a Lady P—— without any date—he makes tremendous love to her, blasphemes about the Lord, and being led into temptation, and

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winds up by saying if she would let him come to drink tea he will go to Miss C.'s benefit that night. I looked out in the *Theatrical Register* (pardon forgetting date, name and so forth) on what day in 176 — what d'ye callem — a Miss C—— had a benefit. I found it was on the very day when Sterne was writing to Mrs Draper to say he was dreadfully ill.

‘Then there is the lie in Dutens’ *Memoirs*, which I quoted in a Roundabout Paper. All which didn’t prevent the scamp from being a great man.’ *

Three years later we find mother and daughter settled at Alby, an old town in Languedoc, probably seeking a still cheaper manner of living. M. Stapfer, who has written with much critical sagacity on Sterne’s works and character, has discovered that here they moved in the best society of the place, and were well appreciated.

At this point, the accounts of Lydia’s history usually end, there being no more known of her, save a dim tradition that she married a Frenchman, and was one of the victims of

* [For further details, consult the “Introduction” to the *Journal to Eliza*. The lie related by Dutens is given among the anecdotes in the first volume of *Letters and Miscellanies*.]

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the Revolution. It is now ascertained that at Alby she became acquainted with a young man of the name of Alexander Anne Medalle, a son of a 'Receveur des Décimes' in the Customs. From the 'Acts' of the town it appears, that on April 28, 1772, she abjured the Protestant religion in the private chapel of the Provost's house, and on the same day was married to the young man, who was a year younger than herself—her mother being too ill to be present.

In the Registers is a most remarkable entry which invites speculation. 'The marriage was imperative (*forcé*) and urgent:' on which, in the Inventaire des Archives d'Alby, is found this gloss: 'For at that period the law authorised *la recherche de la paternité*.' The first impression from this would be unfavourable to Miss Lydia's character, and Lord Howden (in a letter to the *Athenæum*) quotes the altered rule from the Code Napoléon in support of this view; but it seems too harsh and ungracious a conclusion to be accepted on such evidence. The following solution is not improbable. Mrs Sterne was ill, probably in danger of death, for she died a few months later. In case of her death, the difficulty of

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proving consent of parents and guardians would be increased, and the countries being at war, the *recherche de la paternité* would be impossible. The French law is, or used to be, very strict in requiring such formalities. There is certainly obscurity in the matter, and we must not condemn Lydia too hastily.*

Mrs Sterne died in January 1773, at a Dr Lioncière's house in the town, No. 9 Rue St Antoine. It must be said that during her somewhat troubled course, she carried out, in an ungracious way perhaps, correct and respectable principles of conduct. That publication of the Letters which her daughter had once hinted at, was not attempted during her lifetime. In June 1775, Mrs de Medalle was in London for the purpose of publishing these papers, in which her father confesses that he 'was more sick of his wife than ever,' with other indecorous confessions. Such is the story of Sterne and his daughter.

* [On this passage, consult the notes on *Sterne's Daughter* in the *Athenæum* for June 18, and July 2, 1870. The "solution" offered by Mr Fitzgerald is fanciful.]



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APPENDICES

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APPENDIX A

YORICK'S JOURNAL * (page 215)

SOME further extracts from this strange record — which I believe it is intended to publish — will be interesting. I am afraid it must be said that the journal leaves our humorist with scarcely a shred of character; it is a pitiful, undignified display of meanness, deception and disloyalty to his wife. His only excuse is that he was in such a state of infatuation as to be scarcely conscious of what he was writing.

He was not, too, above turning his amatory sorrows to purposes of profit, and, it would seem from the introduction, actually designed publishing the strange incoherent 'screed.' It opens:—

'This journal, wrote under the fictitious names of Yorick and Eliza, and sometimes of the Bramin and the Bramine, but 'tis a diary of the miserable feelings of a person separated from a Lady, for whose society he languished. The real names are foreign, and the account a copy from a French Mans^t. in Mrs S.'s hands — but wrote as it is to cast a Viel (Veil) over them. There is a counterpart, which is the lady's account of

* [The *Journal to Eliza* is printed entire in this edition of Sterne.]

APPENDIX A

what transactions daily happened, and what pursuits occupied her mind during this separation from her Admirer — these are worth reading; the translators cannot say so much in favour of Yorick's, which seem to have little merit beyond their truth.' In other words, Mr Sterne was about to 'make copy' of his agonies, passing it off as a translation from the French. To soothe his feelings he kept this confidential journal day by day. The fragment begins on Monday, April 13th, and the lady sailed on the 23d.* He is 'worn out with fevers of all kinds, but most by that fever of the heart with which I am eternally wasting and shall waste, till I see Eliza again.'

His only comfort was 'to sit and talk with the worthy James.'

'They sank my heart with an infamous account of Draper and his detested character at Bombay. For what a wretch art thou hazarding thy life . . . thou wilt be repaid with injuries and insults.' Then he heightened the picture with his own poignant sufferings and ailments. 'Poor, sick-headed, sick-hearted Yorick! Eliza has made a shadow of thee; I am absolutely good for nothing.' He was bled, but the bandage got loose. 'I half bled to death in bed before I felt it, Eliza — farewell to thee — *I am going.*' He did *not* 'go,' however — got better, and Mrs James comforted him in this way, — 'Tears ran down her cheeks when she saw how pale and wan I was. "I be-

* [This should be the 3^d, although Sterne gives the date as the 23^d.]

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seech you, good soul," she said, "not to regard either difficulties, or expences, but to fly to Eliza directly. I see you will dye without her . . . save yourself for her." "Tell her, my dear friend, that I will meet her in a better world. . . . Tell Eliza, my dear friend that I dyed broken-hearted." She burst into a most pathetic flood of tears. You never beheld so affecting a scene. I had like to have fainted; it was with difficulty I could reach the street door.' All which was but part of the series of inventions and deceptions with which he strove to work on Eliza's feelings. The James's were not persons likely to say such things about the poor, absent Daniel Draper.

Mr Sterne was, no doubt, in bad health, but instead of moping despondingly, as he described himself, he was engaged in a racket of dissipation, having on one occasion, as he boasted, forty invitations! The letter to Lady P., of which Mr Thackeray made so much, was likely enough to have been written about this time.*

As we have seen, his wife and daughter were menacing him with a return, the very thought of which caused him almost ludicrous annoyance and misery. 'Pity my embarrassment — my wife with me every moment of the summer. Think what a restraint upon a *Fancy that should sport in all points at its ease*,' — an ingenious author's plea. 'It will be by stealth, if I am able to go on with my journal at all. You cannot con-

* [This letter was probably written two years earlier. See Letter CVIII.]

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ceive how much and how universally I am pitied. My friends think it will kill me.' His only chance of escape was to buy them off. By June he was negotiating to sell 'my little estate to purchase peace to myself, and a certainty of never being interrupted by Mrs Sterne, who, when she is sensible I have given her all I can part with, she will be at rest herself.' This bit of property was certainly Mrs Sterne's own, which she had settled on him at their marriage. 'Nature,' he adds later, 'is turned upside down; for we have now wives going to visit their husbands, and taking long journies, *out of ill will*. I wish you was with him (Draper), for the same reason that I wish my wife was at Coxwold, that she might sooner depart in peace.' It will be seen that Mr Sterne does not disguise his aspirations. These grow with his *dementia*, and presently take grosser shape. With an incredible folly and lack of decency, he reminds his flame that Mrs Sterne had recently a paralytic stroke. Here was prospect of release. Growing bolder and more reckless, he now began to make some artful suggestions to Eliza. He drew up a fanciful paragraph, which might appear in the papers. 'Mr D——, dying in the year 17—, this lady returned to England, and Yorick, the year after becoming a widower, they were married, and retiring to one of his livings in Yorkshire, where was a most romantic situation, they lived and died happy.'

Still news of the threatening visitors was delayed. 'I sit in dread of to-morrow's post, which is to bring me an account when madame is to arrive.' He was in

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torture and was 'pitied by every soul in proportion as *her character is detested* and her errand known.' The sum that was to secure the absence of the pair, was to be an annuity of £300, the £2000 for Lydia. But his friend Hall suggested that £1500 would be sufficient. 'The advice is well enough if I can get her off with it. I'll summon up the husband, if I can, and keep the £500 for emergencies. Who knows, Eliza, what sort of emergencies may cry out for it? I conceive some; you, Eliza, may conceive others.' (A Shandean turn it may be presumed.) 'Soothe me, calm me, pour thy healing balm into the sorest of hearts. I have a restless, unreasonable wife. She wants £400. *Bad woman!*'

Enlivened by this prospect, he proposes a little plan. 'What say you, Eliza? Shall we join our little capitals together? Well, if Mr Draper gives us leave, we may safely. If your virtue and honour are only concerned, 'twould be safe in Yorick's hands as in a Brother's.'

With this hopeful speculation, he lays out all kinds of plans. There should be new rooms built at the parsonage. He would meet her on the beach, on her arrival from Bombay, when he 'hoped to have everything planned that depends on me properly, *and for what depends upon Him who orders every event for us, I leave and trust it.*' This Stiggins-like sanctimoniousness is painful to read. The folly of the scheme was patent, for even were Mrs Sterne removed out of the way there still remained Daniel Draper. By an odd retribution the planner himself was the first of the quartette concerned to depart this life, or, in his own

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phrase, 'this bale of cadaverous goods was consigned to Pluto.'

He supplies pictures of himself with 'a 100 hens and chickens about him,' and sitting down to venison and cards. 'I want you to be at the other side of my little table.' He was never to be 'such as my honour, my engagements, and promises and desires have fixed me.'

APPENDIX B

SUPPOSED PLAGIARISMS *

DR FERRIAR proved that many of the strange and almost grotesque theories and speculations found in *Tristram* — the ludicrous maunderings of Mr Shandy, his plans, his conceits and reflections, which had excited so much laughter and astonishment, were all drawn from — Rabelais, Montaigne, Bouchet, Beroalde, Scarron, and, above all, Burton — whose works had served him as text-books. From Burton's strange book, known as the *Anatomy of Melancholy*, whole paragraphs had been taken, which, when placed side by side with the original, did not differ by a single word. The grief of Mr Shandy over his son, and his dismal reflections, the 'Lady Baussiere's' inattention to the importunate beggar, and much more, are all to be read, with a few trifling changes, in the *Anatomy*. And yet, though this has been the most insisted on of all Mr Sterne's pilferings, it really amounts almost to nothing, for those familiar with Burton know well that he himself is nothing but a patchwork — a mere

* [Consult the "Introduction" to the third volume of *Tristram Shandy* in this edition.]

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‘cento’ of quotations, and the richest storehouse of scraps and gatherings from every quarter that is known ; therefore, when Mr Sterne helped himself in this quarter, he did not take Burton, but merely what Burton had taken. Half-a-dozen pages would exhaust these pilferings.

The odd learning upon noses, and the allusion to that feature and its significance, must have struck one of Mr Sterne’s tone of mind ; and when he alludes to the supposed origin of ‘soft noses’ he had in his mind the grotesque conversation between Gargantua Grangousier and the monk in Rabelais. The point of Mr Shandy’s remark to Obadiah when tasking him with the failure of his ‘favourite mare,’ is an old jest from the *Moyen de Parvenir*. The black page after Yorick’s death is to be seen in Fludd’s great *History of the World* ; and the shower of dashes over many pages had been tried before ; but to the wrong paging, the ‘marbled pages,’ and the flourish of Trim’s stick, I believe he has the undisputed title. These were poor tricks, of which he was fully rich enough to have been independent.

It seemed almost as though he meant to have a sly Shandean joke at some of the detectives, who he knew would be presently on his track, when he worked a passage from Burton into *Tristram Shandy*, which dwelt on the fashion in which new writers help themselves from the old. ‘As apothecaries,’ said Burton, ‘we make new mixtures every day, pour out of one vessel into another ;’ and again, ‘we twist the same

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rope again and again.' 'Shall we for ever,' said Sterne, 'make new books, as apothecaries make new mixtures, by pouring out of one vessel into another? Are we for ever to be twisting and untwisting the same rope?'

Much stress, too, was laid on his adoption of the affecting passage from Burnet, as to the choice of an inn as a place to die in. But it should be remembered that Burnet reports it of Archbishop Leighton, and that Cicero had uttered the same wish before; and that it is an idea, which, under various shapes, has occurred to many who have found delight and comfort in an inn parlour. After all, there can be no copyright in ideas.

But the truth is, in all the Shandean classics there is a family likeness — they have virtually but the one stock in trade. All these French humorists of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries had common forms, as it were, of thought, and traditional jokes, which were passed on from one to the other. Their humour was of the grotesque and extravagant, — a limited range; and they seemed never to be tired of telling the same story with little variations of shape. As an instance, jesting on the nose was a favourite pastime; and odd speculations as to its relation to character, and what influences determined its length in some men, its breadth in others, gave scope to the strangest and most comic theories. The department relating to noses, the satires, essays, and burlesque disquisitions, in Latin, French and Italian, fill a large shelf in the macaronic library.

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The idea of an eccentric father debating over the education of his son, and laying out Utopian schemes and odd plans for the formation of his mind, may be traced to Martinus Scriblerus, from Scriblerus to Montaigne, and from Montaigne back to Pantagruel. We have the crotchets of Mr Shandy imported into real life, in the curious theories of the father of Miss Edgeworth.

Lovers of Sterne will, however, regret that at least three of his most charming thoughts should not have been his own. We must give up Uncle Toby's fly — the pretty bit of consolation to Maria, 'God tempers the wind to the shorn lamb' * — and what is the greatest sacrifice, Captain Shandy's famous recording angel. The fly, according to Balzac, was originally put out of the window by James the First of England, who made a remark exactly the same as that of Uncle Toby. His 'shorn lamb' is found in a Languedoc proverb, and there is a very similar thought in the '*Outlandish Proverbs*, selected by Mr G. H., 1640.' 'To a close-shorne sheepe God gives wind by measure.' And the famous recording angel has a parallel in a MS. by a monk Alberic, who lived about the year 1100. 'A demon holds a book in which are written the sins of a particular man, and an angel drops on it from a phial a tear which the sinner had shed in doing a good action, and his sins are washed out.' Sterne's thought

* Many pious persons have supposed that this is to be found in the Scripture, and a clergyman is said to have actually preached a sermon upon that text.

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is exquisitely artistic, both in brevity, dramatic effect, and music. Mr Moore worked the idea into his 'Peri' without scruple.

' Black as the damned drops that fall
From the denouncing Angel's pen
Ere Mercy weeps them out again.'

We may track him, however, successfully in another direction, where it is no discredit for him to be found out. I have mentioned that he must have found the names of Trim, Toby, Eugenia, Diego and Obadiah in Shadwell's plays. Mr Jackson discovered the names of Maronette, Battarelle and Guyol, characters in the *Dissertation on Whiskers* in the Girard-Cadière process — a common book on the stalls,* and a book exactly in Sterne's 'line.' The name *La Fleur*, and a trait of his character, is to be found in Bayle.† But while the originality of *Tristram Shandy* is in the main secure, I am afraid, in the case of the *Sermons*, he seems to have cast away all notions of literary morality. His depredations stretched in all directions. From Burnet's *Safe Way to Happiness* he took a passage in his twenty-eighth sermon, and from the same author's *Nature and Grace* he helped himself to a large passage in his thirty-first sermon. From Norris he took many passages, as also from Bishop Hall; and in one of Bentley's sermons is to be found almost word for word the picture of the Inquisition. The most daring, however, of his plagiarisms, was that of some passages in his seventh posthu-

* Jackson's *Four Ages*.

† *Ibid.*

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mous sermon, which were literally transferred wholesale from Leighton's twelve sermons, the author of which was an obscure prebendary, not likely to attract notice.*

He is even to be found copying from himself, and to save himself trouble sometimes reproduced a whole passage from an old sermon in a new one.† The idea of the 'hobby horse' is to be found in *Don Guzman d'Alfarache*.

In the *Sentimental Journey*, too, it has been said that there is great resemblance to the tone of Marivaux and Crebillon. This, however, is far too wide a field to make such a charge of any serious weight. The influence of Marivaux and his style was felt more widely in French literature than is now supposed; and his peculiar manner for a time leavened and refined a vast deal of the lighter literature of his day. 'Marivauder' even became a French word. For Crebillon, Sterne made no secret of his admiration: he put his *Égarements* into the hands of the French soubrette he met on the Quai Conti; and I daresay, if one were inclined to search

* We must even refuse the extenuation allowed him by Dr Ferriar, in the case of the grotesque openings to his *Sermons* (e. g., 'That I deny!' after the text was delivered), prototypes for which are to be found in the odd Shandean book called *Friar Gerund*. Dr Ferriar says Sterne could not have seen this curious production, as it appeared *after* the publication of *Tristram Shandy*. The truth is, it was published *before* it, and was just the book to have found its way to the Skelton library. Still, one like Sterne, familiar with the *ana*, must have met numbers of droll preaching stories of this class.

† See the passage on David cutting off the skirt of Saul's robe, in the sermon 'On Self-Knowledge,' to be found, almost word for word, in a previous sermon.

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these questionable and once fashionable romances, some hints for the scenes in the *Sentimental Journey* might be lighted on.*

* [In the third paragraph from the end of this appendix — in the notes to it — Mr Fitzgerald says some interesting things mingled with errors and obscure allusions.

The Mr. Jackson is William Jackson of Exeter, author of *The Four Ages together with Essays on Various Subjects* (London, 1798). In this book Jackson deals with Sterne in a brief essay entitled *On Literary Thievery*. He particularly points out Sterne's obligations to Bayle's *Dictionary* and to *Twelve Sermons preached in the Cathedral Church of Lincoln* (London, 1797) by Walter Leightonhouse (not Leighton, as given by Mr Fitzgerald), a prebendary of Lincoln. Bayle, says Jackson, "furnished Sterne with the names of Rebours and La Fosseuse and many little circumstances in his story of *The Whiskers*, which may be found in the article of Margaret de Valois, together with the name La Fleur, a footman, and a little trait of his character." There is no mention in *The Four Ages* of the Gerard Cadière procès, for which consult Marie Catherine Cadière in the *Grand Dictionnaire*. From Leightonhouse's twelfth sermon, Sterne took entire sections for Sermon XXXIV in the printed collections.

In *Friar Gerund* of the footnote, Mr Fitzgerald refers to the *Historia del Famoso Predicador Fray Gerundio de Campazas alias Zotes*, a novel depicting ecclesiastical manners in Spain in the eighteenth century, by José Francisco de Isla. The first part appeared at Madrid in 1758. So far as is known, no English translation was made until 1772 — four years after Sterne's death. Though Sterne probably never read the book, it shows that there was nothing very extraordinary in Yorick's pulpit manners. The Spanish friars, if Isla is to be trusted, were much more sensational than Sterne.]





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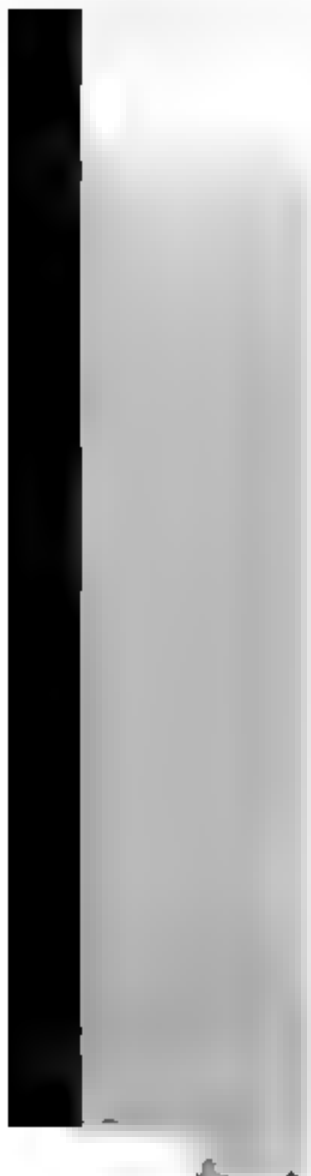
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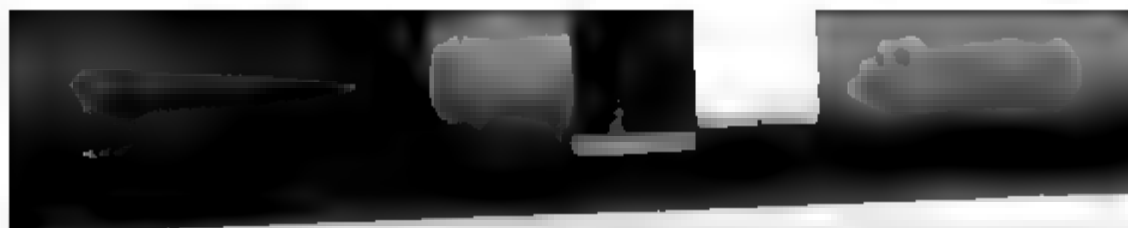
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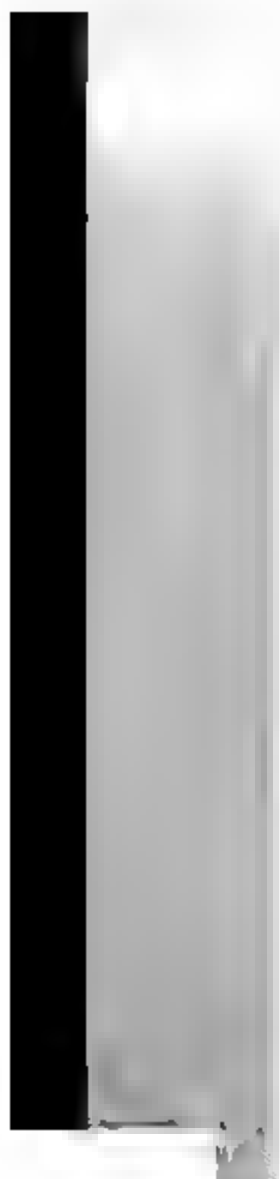
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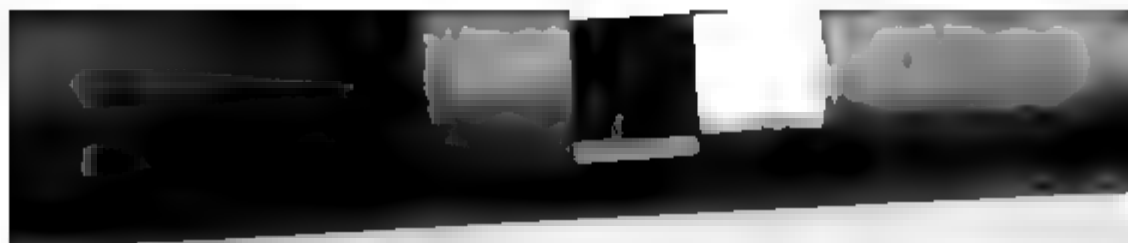
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